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Shankara's Brahmayāga



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P R E F A C E

This work, which is with sundry modifications the thesis on which the writer was awarded the Ph. D. degree in 1956, embodies an humble but sincere endeavour to understand Shri Shankaracharya's monumental philosophy. This philosophy is, without doubt, one of those precious heritages of ours of which we can justly be proud and which need to be carefully preserved. However indifferent the present youth of India may feel towards philosophy in general, and towards Shankara's philosophy in particular, the fact yet remains that philosophy has been, in Dr. DasGupta's words, "the most important achievement of Indian thought", and that Shri Shankaracharya or Shankara was, if not the greatest, one of the greatest contributors to it.

Our task is rather difficult and our subject, really, vast and complicated. Directly or indirectly so much has been written on Shankara's philosophy that any claim to its full knowledge would really be a very tall one. However, an attempt has been made to acquaint ourselves with at least the most salient features of it and to dissipate the doubts which generally assail the minds of its modern readers. And so far as our taking a decision with regard to a disputable point pertaining to it is concerned, reliance has mostly been placed on Shankara's own assertions rather than on their interpretations by others. Divergent are, indeed, some of these interpretations of his views, and in such cases it is certainly not desirable to associate ourselves with this and not with that interpretation, unless there be sufficient ground for doing so. But where else can this ground be found if not in Shankara's own words or works?

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of Shankara's philosophy is its proclamation of the ultimate identity of the individual self or consciousness with the universal principle of Consciousness, called Brahma. And Shankara, it seems, has used all his logic and other relevant resources somehow to bring home to his reader this fundamental notion, nay, the indubitable experience of his self. No doubt, Shankara has also advocated the non-difference of the entire world with his Absolute Existence, the Brahma; but by that non-difference he does not mean the same sort of identity as that of the self with it. Non-difference to Shankara, as the author of Bhamati has observed, is merely a denial of difference

or of independent reality, and not an affirmation of identity in the strict sense. And it is, according to him, only when a person has directly realized his own identity with Brahma that he can have a fully convincing experience of the universal non-difference.

The main point of the superiority of this system of philosophy over other systems lies probably in its great promise of realization of one's identity with Brahma here and now, provided that one fulfils all its requisite conditions, including a strict moral discipline. So exalted a conception of our personal self as characterizes this school of thought seems to be available in no system of philosophy different from it. Our true self, however, has got to be seen; and in order to see it we have not only to hear, think and meditate, but also to lead a perfectly pious and virtuous life. For its realization purity of heart is as essential as excellence of insight.

A philosophy like that of Shankara seems to be a crying need of our times; for it can quite conveniently be calculated to have the most needed spirit of love between man and man, and nation and nation. What knowledge, indeed, can have a more salutary effect than that of the real unity of all, which, as it has been maintained in the Isha Upanishad, cuts at the very root of all ill-will, partiality and prejudice, and serves to engender and foster universal love? And "When", as said the Indian philosopher-poet, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, "our self is illuminated with the light of love, then the negative aspect of its separateness with others loses its finality, and then our relationship with others is no longer that of competition and conflict, but of sympathy and co-operation." Such a "teaching", as Dr. Tagore went on to say, "is very much needed in the present age for those who boast of the freedom enjoyed by their nations, using that freedom for building up a dark world of spiritual blindness, where the passions of greed and hatred are allowed to roam unchecked, having for their allies deceitful diplomacy and a wide-spread propaganda of falsehood, where the soul remains caged and the self battens upon the decaying flesh of its victims."

Since the time Dr. Tagore gave expression to the above-stated deplorable condition of the civilized world and to its need for a love-fostering philosophy the world, it appears, has headed fast in the direction of a more cut-throat competition and a subtler deceitful diplomacy. The forces of greed and spiritual corruption seem to have been let loose; and so there has arisen a greater need for such a philosophy as may bring about a real and salutary transformation in human beings' evalua-

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tions by bringing home to them the fact of their ultimate unity, and may thereby make them love, and not hate, one another. Such is, it can be said, the philosophy of Shankara who seems to have caught the real spirit of the Upanishads, and "In the whole world", as Schopenhauer has so impartially observed, "there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads."

This work has been named 'Shankara's Brahmapada', for Brahma, with Shankara, is not only the highest reality and ultimate ground and support of all, but also the highest goal of all rational beings, the absolute Being as well as the absolute Value.

Though primarily expository in nature this study of Shankara is not exclusively so. The critical and comparative aspects of it have not been altogether neglected. All the same it cannot be claimed, strictly speaking, to be a critical and comparative study of Shankara; for its main object has been to understand his philosophy rather than to criticize it or to compare it with similar trends of thought existing elsewhere. In fact, many of the western thinkers with whose views Shankara's ideas could conveniently be compared here and there, have not been even touched upon, and many a critic, both direct and indirect, have been simply overlooked either because their criticisms are based upon their misunderstanding of this philosophy or because they do not fall in with the general scheme of our treatment of it.

The first chapter of this work has been devoted to the formulation of the main problems bearing on Shankara's philosophy, and, besides containing an advance synopsis of our findings with regard to them, it also contains a plea for applying the epithet 'Brahmapada' to it. In Chapter II the question of the probable sources of Shankara's Brahmapada has been taken up, and the view that it has been essentially influenced by Buddhism has been refuted. Chapter III gives an account of Shankara's view of Brahma or true Self, and contains the discussion of many important problems pertaining to it. Chapters IV and V are about the world and the empirical self, and deal with a number of topics bearing on them and their place in Shankara's Brahmapada, while Chapter VI has been devoted to the discussion of two gross misconceptions about it. In Chapter VII the ethico-spiritual aspect of Brahmapada has been taken up, and it has been shown at length that this aspect of it is as important as its metaphysical or intellectual aspect. Chapter VIII is the study of the important and baffling problem of evil, and contains a critical exposition of some of the representative views about

(IV)

it. The rest of the chapters are, in essence, of the nature of comparative study. In chapter IX four leading Indian exponents of the Upanishadic philosophy—Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva and Vallabha—have been taken up for study, and it has been maintained that their views are not so faithful to the general spirit of the original texts as are those of Shankara. Chapter X is a brief and comparative study of some of the most prominent western idealists, while Chapter XI contains a general critical estimate of Shankara's Brahmapada and seeks to find some of its important truths not only in the assertions of two of the most leading modern philosophers but also in the so-called theories of the most advanced science, viz., Physics.

The obligations which I am under are too many to be specifically mentioned here. I, therefore, humbly take the undue liberty of deviating from the usual practice of severally acknowledging them name-wise. I feel I am immensely indebted to all those writers and thinkers who have had a hand in shaping my views, especially to those disinterested lovers of learning whose works and views have directly determined the nature of my present undertaking. But for them and their guidance, oral or otherwise, I am sure, it could never have been possible for me to do the little I have done. I pay my best homage to all of them and sincerely thank them all for the precious enlightenment I have received from them. My thanks are also due to the publishers and printers of this work, the proprietors of the 'Kitab Ghar' and the 'Vivek Press' respectively.

R. S. Naulakha



अच्युतं परमानन्दं चिद्घनं सत्यमद्वयम् ।
वन्दे सर्वगुरुं ब्रह्म शंकरं दिव्यदर्शनम् ॥
अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्यं शुद्धं सर्वात्मप्रत्ययम् ।
वन्दे सर्वप्रियं ब्रह्म गुणातीतं गुहाहितम् ॥
सर्वावस्थासु यन्नित्यं विद्यते चापि भासते ।
वन्दे ब्रह्म तदेवाऽहं ब्रह्मवादचिकीर्षया ॥



DEDICATION

*With Profound Reverence and Affection
to*

SHRI KRISHNA

Who said to Arjuna or Nara

‘यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ववासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व भवर्षणम् ॥’

एवं

‘अह्यार्पणं अह्य हविर्अह्याग्नी अह्यणा हुतम् ।
अह्यैव तेन गन्तव्यं अह्यकर्मसमाधिना ॥’

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ABBREVIATIONS

AHIP.	... A History of Indian Philosophy (Dr. J. N. Sinha)
Ait. Up.	... Aitareya Upanishad.
AP.	... Aparokshanubhuti.
AR.	... Appearance and Reality (F. H. Bradley)
BG.	... Bhagavadgita.
Br. Up.	... Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.
BS.	... Brahma-Sutras.
Chh. Up.	... Chhandogya Upanishad,
CS. Up. Phil.	... A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy (Ranade)
ERE.	... Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
HIP.	... A History of Indian Philosophy (Dr. DasGupta).
Intro.	... Introduction.
IP.	... Indian Philosophy (S. Radhakrishnan).
IPS. P.	... Indian Psychology : Perception (J. N. Sinha).
Mand. K.	... Mandukya Karika.
Mand. Up.	... Mandukya Upanishad.
Mund. Up.	... Mundaka Upanishad.
NBS.	... Nimbarka-Bhashya on Brahma-Sutras.
Phil.	... Philosophy.
PQ.	... The Philosophical Quarterly.
Psy.	... Psychology.
RBG.	... Ramanuja-Bhashya on Bhagavadgita.
RBS.	... Ramanuja-Bhashya on Brahma-Sutras.
RRC. Phil.	... The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy (S. Radhakrishnan).
SB.	... Shankara's Bhashya on.
SBG.	... Shankara's Bhashya on Bhagavadgita.
SBS.	... Shankara's Bhashya on Brahma-Sutras.
SDS.	... Sarvadarshanasangraha.
SLS.	... Siddhantalessangraha.

Shvet. Up. ... Śhvetashvatara Upanishad.
Tait. Up. ... Taittiriya Upanishad.
TLVP. ... Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy
 (Max Muller).
Trans. ... Translation.
Up. ... Upanishad.
Vol. ... Volume.
VPB. ... Vedantaparibhasha.
VPS. ... Vivaranaprameyasangraha.
Yv. Phil. ... The Yogavasishtha And Its Philosophy
 (Dr. B. L. Atreya).

1

Introduction

‘जिज्ञासा तु संशयस्य कार्यम्’ (वाचस्पति मिश्र)

‘तद्ब्रह्म तदमृतं स आत्मा’ इति च ब्रह्मवादस्य लिंगानि (शंकर)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1—A Problem and its occasion—

Shri Vachaspati Mishra, the well-known author of *Bhamati*, seems to be considerably right when he opines that 'a desire to know is an outcome of doubt' and that 'doubt motivates reflection.'¹ Reflecting or rationalizing is inherent in human nature. But a man does not begin to reflect until and unless there is an adequate occasion for it, and an occasion to reflect is immensely provided when something of doubtful nature appears before him.

Of course, there may be other occasions for reflection, such as 'wonder' (as Plato and his followers would urge), or a practical need of one's life (as a pragmatist or humanist would hold), or a feeling of dissatisfaction at the current values of one's time (as others may add); but the fact that doubt is one of these occasions, and really a very potent one to stimulate reflection, cannot be set aside. The students of western philosophy know well that Descartes' philosophical speculations had their origin in doubt and that Kant's critical philosophy had for its starting-point the doubtful nature of the then-existent dogmatic philosophy of the west. Whether it be a case of wonder, or of a practical need, or of a consideration of values of life, the element of uncertainty or unclarity as to the situation or things concerned is always there. And that was probably why Vachaspati Mishra, who did not fail to appreciate the part the practical motives play in stimulating our reflections about things,² gave prominence to the factor of doubt as a means of arousing them. In fact, what is certain and clear does not give rise to any enquiry about itself. A definite and determinate cognition of something does not present to us a problem about what it is. As defined in the *Oxford Concise Dictionary* "a problem is a question or difficulty

1 *Bhamati*, I. 1. 1. 2 *Ibid*, *Adhyasaparakarana*.

propounded for or in the need of some solution." When everything goes well, when there is no difficulty or doubt, no divergence in views or courses before a person, when one's curiosity is not aroused by something unknown or known partly or vaguely, there is hardly any problem. All problems, whether scientific, philosophical, or of every-day practical life, have their origin in difficulty or doubt. The specific situations or occasions which give rise to these mental states, and thereby to a sort of tension or felt-gap in one's mind, tend to arouse and feed one's instinctive curiosity. And this instinctive curiosity, especially if it is strong and persistent enough, sets a person to seek a theoretical or practical, as the case may be, solution there-of.

2—Some philosophical problems and their nature

There may, indeed, be an endless variety of problems occasioned by an end-less variety of situations and experienced by an end-less variety of human beings. Human life, in all its walks and phases, is really beset with innumerable simple or complex problems. To prepare a complete inventory of these problems is, however, not possible. But speaking in a general way we may say that they take the form of the questions 'who, what, how and why ?' Both science and philosophy try to tackle these questions; but there is some difference between them and their points of view as well. We are, however, not much concerned with their differences or likeness here. What would suffice for our present purpose is to note that while scientific queries are concerned with different parts or cross-sections of the universe, philosophy takes up the universe or our experience of it as a whole and brings its enquiries to bear upon it. A philosophical study, whether speculative or critical, is essentially characterized by the comprehensiveness of its out-look or by the generality of its stand-point. But the so-called sciences, on the other hand, are characterized by the abstraction of their out-looks or by the specialization or narrowness of their fields of enquiry. They look at things from this or that particular point of view, and not from the point of view of reality as a whole. They take up for their study only the phenomenal and what we may call the known-aspect of our experience, and leave the noumenal and the knower-aspect of experience almost completely untouched. Even the knowing aspect of a knowledge-situation or experience is practically left out of consideration by them.

Moreover, the most characteristic feature of sciences is to describe facts or phenomena, and not to explain them in the strict sense. For, scientific hypotheses either pertain to the behavioural modes of these facts or phenomena or to the nature and construction of these facts themselves. It is with 'how' and 'what', and not with 'why' that they are characteristically

concerned. Philosophy, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with the 'why' of things rather than with the 'how' and 'what' of them. Its real or preponderant interest lies in the noumena or reality as such, and not in the phenomena or reality as it appears. In other words, it seeks ultimate explanations of things, and not only the knowledge of their outward behaviour or nature. Apart from it, it is not only the known-aspect of human experience that philosophy like science confines, itself to. The knower and the knowing aspects of experience are as important for it as is the known-aspect of it for science. Moreover, philosophy, unlike science, attaches as much importance to the study of values as it does to that of facts themselves. The problems of philosophy, therefore, are different from those of science, and may, in brief, be said mainly to centre round three things, viz., God, man and the world. And the nature of these problems may be well indicated by means of the questions which a student of philosophy generally raises and seeks to answer. Hence it is worth-while to mention a few of them before we proceed to state some of our own main problems about Shankara's philosophy itself. They are : Is the universe of the nature of thought or of matter ? Is it under the rule of mechanical laws, or does it have some plan, purpose or goal ? Is there any God or Spiritual principle that creates and governs it ? What is life ? What is death ? What is right ? What is wrong ? What is the highest value or Summum-bonum of our life ? Why are some people happy, and others unhappy ? Why is there evil in the world ? Is it possible to know the reality as such ? What are the sources of valid knowledge ? What is knowledge and its nature ? Is the world of our experience really what it appears to be ? Wherefrom and why are we born ? Why is there the world at all ?

Shankara set to himself the task of tackling such problems as ardently and sincerely as any other thinker of the world has ever done. The major portion of his short but busy life was continuously devoted to the cause of a careful and consistent thinking about the nature of the world in general and about the nature and ultimate end of the individual persons in particular. And it is the right significance of his philosophical views that we have here undertaken to understand. Our problems, therefore, mainly concern Shankara's philosophy rather than philosophy as such, the former directly but the latter only indirectly and by the way.

But where is the occasion for there being a problem about Shankara's philosophy ? His philosophical views, it may be urged, are already there, and they are known for what they are. Is it not then useless to grind what has already been ground well ?

3—An occasion for the arousal of problems about Shankara's philosophy—

"Shankara", it may be said, "is the central thinker in the history of Indian philosophy".¹ While, on the one hand, he has either consolidated systematized and amplified or criticized and repudiated the philosophical speculations of his predecessors or contemporaries, he has, on the other hand, either served as beacon-light not only to a long and uninterrupted series of eminent scholars and writers but also to the less thoughtful teeming millions of this vast sub-continent, or he has figured as a common and constant target of his opponents' attacks. His adversaries, especially the founders and followers of the different Vaishnavite sects, while trying to justify their own views, have directed a good deal of their efforts, implicitly or explicitly, against his system of philosophy. And this, along with the zealous endeavours of his own followers to defend him against his adversaries' attacks, has given rise to a vast philosophical literature, both for and against him. A large number of philosophical works consisting of commentaries, sub-commentaries, glosses, as well as independent writings about his philosophical views have followed his own works and commentaries on the Upanishads, the Brahma-sutras and the Bhagavadgita. Some of them are really the products of rare logical acuity and can hold their own against any dialectical system developed in the west.

Even in modern India Shankara's philosophy may undoubtedly be said to hold its sway. That it has attracted towards itself a larger number of scholars and adherents than any other single system of Indian philosophy has so far done cannot be denied. This, while, on the one hand, indicates its survival value, has, on the other hand, brought about certain evil effects as well. And one of these undesirable effects is that even such views are sometimes attributed to Shankara as it is really very difficult to justify on a comprehensive and faithful survey of his works. Through centuries of criticism, counter-criticism and defence much dust seems to have gathered on his genuine views, and due to divergent and even conflicting opinions and estimates thereof they have come to be more or less shrouded in mystery. Much misrepresentation and superficial-sense-seeking careless colouring and twisting, enormous prejudice and partial interpretations seem to have joined hands to confuse and even mislead a sincere but simple seeker of truth. What wonder is it, then, if Shankara's philosophy presents a real problem to him?

¹ R. P. Singh: Vedant of Shankara, preface, p. 1.

4—A few of our problems about Shankara's philosophy

As a matter of fact there are a number of problems about Shankara's philosophy that are likely to arise in the mind of an unsophisticated person, if he happens to peruse different expositions of it or to read a work like *Siddhantalessa-sangraha* which is a compendium of different views held by a number of scholars belonging to Shankara's own school of thought. But for the sake of convenience we may classify these problems under four different heads, viz., the problems pertaining to Brahman or God, the problems pertaining to jivas or individual souls, the problems that pertain to the world we live in and, then, the problems of general nature. Coming under, or connected with, each of these four heads there are a number of questions and topics which we shall take up and discuss in due course. All the same, it seems to be desirable to take note of some of our main problems here and also to mark, in passing, our findings about Shankara's views with regard to them.

Under the first head, viz., problems pertaining to Brahman, may be mentioned the following questions : Is Brahman the same as Ishvara ? Is Brahman immanent or transcendent, or both or neither ? Is it a perfectly homogeneous Being, or a Being that contains the manifested world, or its germinal form, in it ? If it is pure Being, is it the same as Non-Being or indeterminate void ? Is Brahman a creator ? If not, then what is it that accounts for the creation or appearance of the world ?

Then, the main problems pertaining to the individual souls or jivas may be said to be mainly two in number. One of them is about their number, as it has been explicitly stated in the *Siddhantalessasangraha* : 'Is there only one jiva, or are there many jivas ?'¹, and the other is associated with the doctrines of limitation and reflection propounded by the Bhamati school of thought and the Vivarana School respectively. We may very well ask ourselves : which of these two doctrines is really in conformity with the views of Shankara himself ? Is a jiva, according to Shankara, a reflection of Brahman, or a limitation of it ?

Of the problems that arise in connection with the world and may be said to fall under the third head of our problems the following are the main ones : Is the world, according to Shankara, real or unreal ? Is it Brahman's maya, or our own ignorance that is responsible for it ? Is maya the same as avidya ? Is or is not Shankara a subjective idealist ? If not

1 SLS., 1.43. (eko jiva utanekeh)

is he, then, a realist ? And then the following may be said to be the main problems which pertain to Shankara or his philosophy in general rather than to a particular aspect of it : Is or is not Shankara a mere mystic or theologian ? Is or is not his philosophy unethical or anti-ethical ? Is or is it not primarily a value philosophy ? Is the Vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja or the Bhedabhedavada of Nimbarkacharya more faithful to the spirit of the Upanishads than the Advaita-vada of Shankara ? Is 'mayavada' an appropriate epithet for it ?

Now, if we go through the works of Dr. Das Gupta, Prof. Radhakrishnan, Prof. Hiriyanna, Dr. J. N. Sinha, Prof. Kokilleshwar Shastri, Shri V. J. Kirtikar, Dr. P. T. Raju, Dr. Devaraja, Dr. R. P. Singh, Professors Paul Deussen, Thibaut, Max Muller, Gough, and others, we come across more or less divergent and sometimes even antithetical answers to these and other such questions. No doubt, they do not all differ, and on all points, nonetheless they do not all agree on all points. The readers of their works, therefore, are very likely to be confronted with either this or that problem in this or that context. And one to whom these and other such problems do not fail to occur has no other alternative but to fall back upon Shankara's own writings in order to get them solved. This book is, indeed, the result of endeavours to acquire a first-hand knowledge of Shankara's views on the various topics dealt with in it. And the findings with regard to some of the problems mentioned here are, in brief, stated below.

But before stating them it seems to be desirable to add that Shankara has recognized two different points of view—one lower or empirical point of view and the other higher or ultimate point of view. The lower or the empirical (vyavaharika) point of view is the common point of view of the finite human beings; whereas the higher or ultimate (paramarthika) point of view is the point of view of the ultimate or absolute Reality which, according to Shankara, is none other than Brahman or the universal Self itself. What has been maintained from the absolute point of view needs to be carefully distinguished from what is held to be true from the empirical point of view, and vice versa. For it is a confusion between these two stand-points that has, indeed, been largely responsible for so many misinterpretations and for so much of misunderstanding of Shankara's philosophy.

Some findings with regard to the problems mentioned here

Now, coming to our observations with regard to the problems raised here, it may safely be said that from the highest point of view Brahman

is, with Shankara, the only true, undefinable and indescribable reality, and as such, it can either be said to be transcendent, or to be neither immanent in nor transcendent to the world; for, the notions of immanence and transcendence both imply the existence of the manifold world which as such, does not exist from the point of view of the ultimate Reality itself. But from a lower point of view the same Brahman which is in-itself indeterminate and unqualified may also be viewed as the wielder of the inconceivable and mysterious world-projecting power called maya, and through it as both the material and efficient cause of the world, i.e., as omniscient and omnipotent Creator and Lord of it. Thus the Ishvara or God of Shankara is none other than his Brahman itself. When Brahman which may be said to be of the nature of pure being, consciousness and bliss is conceived as a being-in-becoming, and, as such, as both immanent in and transcendent to the world of becoming, and that from our own point of view, it is called Ishvara. As according to Shankara a self-existent and immutable being alone deserves to be called truly real, whatever there is of the nature of becoming has got to be viewed as unreal. Shankara, therefore, has no hitch or hesitation in fully endorsing the view of the sage of the Chhandogya Upanishad by regarding all names and forms, which are ever changing, as matters of mere speech. Thus, from the strict or absolute reality point of view all that is created, all plurality and finitude, comes to be viewed as unreal, and Shankara is quite consistent in his thinking when he pronounces also the empirically-held creatorship of the Lord to be of the same nature. If what is believed to be created is unreal, the question of its creation or creatorship really does not arise. Shankara's conception of the highest Reality or Brahman, therefore, is not of a creator Brahman, but of a homogeneous, self-shining being which is eternally changeless and has no room for becoming in it. So long as becoming is experienced as a fact there, 'being' has got to be posited as its ground and support. So from the empirical point of view Shankara has again no hesitation in declaring with the sage of the Chhandogya Upanishad that the creation or the world has not only its origin in the sat or Brahman, but even now when it is there it has the same Sat for its ground and support.

Shankara's Brahman is neither a mere non-entity or void nor a jejune abstraction of thought. A non-entity, according to Shankara, cannot be conceived to be the origin or ground and support of anything whatsoever. Moreover, the reality of Brahman, Shankara would say, is ever experienced by every person in the most certain and indubitable experience of his own self. To think of it as a void or blank is the inevitable result of trying to view and understand the infinite in terms of the familiar finites.

It is to forget that self-shining consciousness can never be known as an object or that, to put it in other words, the centre of a circle can never be seen by being located on its circumference. One's failure to know the subject of knowledge as an object of it or to see the centre of a figure on its surface does not mean their absence or non-entity. It simply shows the futility of false approach to them. If a subject can ever be known, it can be known as subject only, and if we wish to see the centre of a figure, we have got to direct our vision towards it, and not away from it. The infinite, similarly, can be known as infinite only, and never as a finite fact. And as infinite it can only be known by the infinite itself. In order to know it, therefore, one has got to be one with it. Until and unless a person ceases to look at things from his usual finite point of view and comes to attain the point of view of the infinite being itself, it is all in vain to make surmises as to the real nature of the infinite. But to one who attains infinitude or Brahmanhood Brahman, according to Shankara, is the fullest and the truest reality, and not a void like that of a Shunyavadin Buddhist.

Just as the Ishvara of Shankara is essentially identical with Brahman so also every individual soul, according to him, is essentially the same (as Brahman). There is absolutely no difference between them from the ultimate point of view. But so long as that point of view is not attained by an individual his difference from Brahman, as well as from other individual selves, is as stern a fact as it is actually felt by him. Shankara, therefore, has viewed the jivas or individual souls as such to be many, and not as one. So far as the ultimate point of view is concerned the very question of the oneness or manyness of jivas does not arise, and so long as this question continues to arise the manyness of jivas is as stern a fact as this question itself is.

As to the later developed doctrines of reflection and limitation it may be said that Shankara has had recourse to both these conceptions, and has not favoured any one of them exclusively. As a matter of fact, these notions have been employed by him only as helpful means to bring home to an aspirant the liberating knowledge of his identity with Brahman or universal Self, and are not intended to be ultimate facts. Shankara, therefore, would view the difference between the Bhamati and Vivarana schools of thought on this point as merely superficial or as superfluous even.

From the ultimate point of view the world, according to Shankara, is, no doubt, unreal, but it is certainly not so from the practical point of view. By denying its reality he does not mean to affirm its illusoriness, much less its absolute non-existence. Shankara is vehemently opposed to the views of

both the Vijñānavādin and the Shūnyavādin Buddhists. So, to hold that Shankara is a subjective idealist, or nihilist, is to betray a very great ignorance of his genuine views. But, not-to-be a subjective idealist *is not* to be a realist. If Shankara is not one he is also not the other. Realism is not the only alternative to subjective-idealism. As an objective empirical reality the world, according to Shankara, has for its origin the *māya* or mysterious power of the supreme Lord and is not a creation of this or that finite person's own mind. It may, however, be viewed as being due to an individual's ignorance or *avidyā* in so far as he remains in bondage in it only so long as he is in ignorance of the nature of his true Self and imagines himself to be a finite person. Primarily the terms '*māya*' and '*avidyā*' do not seem to have been used by Shankara in the same sense. If sometimes the term '*avidyā*' has been used as a substitute for the term *māya*, it is because *Māya* is of the nature of non-knowledge or non-consciousness (*avidyā*), and not because Shankara holds the world to be a creation of an individual's ignorance.

To think that Shankara is not a philosopher but a mere mystic or theologian is not only to betray one's ignorance of his extensive use of incisive reasoning, but also to confine philosophy within the four walls of an unnecessarily restricted sense. By basing his philosophy on all sorts of experience, and by giving proper place to faith in it, Shankara does not cease to be a philosopher. On the other hand, he thereby lays down the foundation of a true philosophy which should take all forms of experience into consideration and should also venerate the feeling of faith which is so universal and in the beginning so necessary for a true aspirant after knowledge. It is not initial faith but final faith that needs to be discouraged. And it is what Shankara rightly does.

Shankara's philosophy is not at all unethical, nothing to say of being anti-ethical. Morality or moral discipline has a very high place in it. The ethical aspect of his philosophy is as important, and deserves as much cognizance and attention, as the intellectual aspect of it. These two aspects may, in fact, be said to be the two veritable legs of his philosophy. To deprive it of either of them is virtually to cripple it.

No doubt, the true 'Existence' or 'Being' of Shankara, namely Brahman, is also the pure Bliss and the highest ideal of human life, and as such the greatest or the only true value too; but this fact does not warrant the assertion that he is primarily a value philosopher. The idea of existence or reality is more fundamental than the idea of value, and Shankara has duly recognized it in describing his Brahman as '*sat-chit-ananda*' (existence,

consciousness and bliss), and never as 'ananda-chit-sat' or as 'ananda-sat-chit'.

That Shankara was a great votary of the Upanishads cannot be denied. As a matter of fact, it was from these scriptures that he got his philosophical inspiration. And we have no hesitation in maintaining that his interpretations of the Upanishads are more faithful to their general spirit than other interpretations that have been put upon them. Nothing to say of Madhvacharya, an advocate of the doctrine of 'dvaita' (duality) or bheda (difference), even Ramanujacharya and Nimbarkacharya, who have propounded the doctrines of Vishishtadvaita (qualified monism) and Dvaitadvaita (dualistic monism) or Bhedabheda respectively, do not seem to have caught the real spirit of the Upanishads so successfully as Shankara seems to have done.

6—The epithet 'Mayavada', and its inappropriateness for Shankara's Philosophy—

Shankara's philosophy has, no doubt, often been designated as mayavada. But in fact it does not seem to be proper to apply this epithet to it.

So far as we can say the term mayavada was first applied to Shankara's philosophy by Bhaskaracharya 1 who "...was either a contemporary of Shankara or flourished just after his death." 2 And it was probably out of malice that he did so, and this is sufficiently indicated by the tone and terms of the assertions that he has made while making use of the term 'mayavada.' Like Padmapurana, which has also used the epithet mayavada, definitely for Shankara's philosophy 3, Bhaskara calls this philosophy 'asat' and describes it as hidden Buddhism with its roots cut asunder (vichchhinnamulam). The thing is that from the sixth century (A. D.) onward Buddhism was on the wane and the old Vedic religion was gradually gaining ground in its various revised forms, with the result that during the days of Bhaskara and afterwards people in general began to look down upon such views as could be shown, in any way, to be associated with the fast decaying and the then disfavoured Buddhism. And this state of affairs seems to have been, in all likelihood, taken advantage of by those persons who could not see eye to eye with Shankara. How question-

1 See Bhaskara : Brahma-Sutra Bhashya, I. 2. 6, 12; I. 4. 21, 25; II. 1. 14; II. 2. 29.

2 R. P. Singh : The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 369.

3 Padmapurana, (mayavadam asat shastram prachchhannam bauddha meva cha, mayaiva kathitam devi kalau Shankara rupina).

begging epithets and slogans are taken advantage of in our own days we all know well. The formula 'call a dog mad and kill it' seems to have always been a cheap device employed by unscrupulous seekers of success against their opponents in almost every walk of human life.

The writers who followed Bhaskara and belonged to cults other than that of Shankara, it appears, "only multiplied his voice, and the view that Shankara's philosophy was mere mayavada was given currency."¹ And thus there arose a general reaction against it. It has been rightly observed by Prof. Hiriyantha that 'in the time of Ramanuja there was a fresh circumstance, viz., the reaction against the purely absolutist philosophy of Shankara and its seeming negations.....'² And this reaction against Shankara's philosophy which was first set in motion by Bhaskara went on gaining momentum with time till its force was counteracted by eminent scholars belonging to Shankara's own school of thought. But the use of the term 'mayavada' was not objected to even by these scholars. On the other hand, a number of them, including even Vachaspati Mishra, the author of the well-known *Bhamati*, saw no harm even in appropriating it. But this does not prove the appropriateness of this term:

The term 'mayavada' seems to have been appropriated by Vachaspati in a sense which was very much dissimilar to the sense in which it was originally applied by Bhaskara. "To Bhaskara," as it has been rightly pointed out by Dr. R. P. Singh, "the Mayavadin did not believe in the reality of external objects; he was a mere 'abahyarthavadin'; 'Avidya' was the sole explanatory principle with him—he was an 'avidyamatra-vadin'; for him the external objects were merely phases of consciousness; thus the Mayavadin was merely a hidden Buddhist. But for Vachaspati Mayavada is the doctrine that Brahman, the ultimate reality, creates the entire universe of names and forms, which is characterized by multiplicity, without destroying its real nature. This is what Shankara also holds, though he calls this view *Brahmavada*, and not *Mayavada* as Vachaspati does".³

As to the appropriation of the term 'mayavada' by some other later writers belonging to the same school of thought, it may reasonably be believed that they innocently followed the foot-steps of Vachaspati Mishra and suspected no harm in adopting this term, especially when it had already been adopted by so eminent a scholar as Vachaspati Mishra

1 The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 369.

2 Hiriyantha : *Outlines of Indian Phil.*, p. 384.

3 The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 371.

was. But in doing so they, like Vachaspati himself, little realized that the retention of this term would, in the long run, "give rise to misconceptions and allow them to gather round the Vedanta of Shankara".¹ There are very few persons who now understand this term in the sense in which it was retained by Vachaspati. The sense which Bhaskara put upon it has virtually succeeded in eclipsing Vachaspati's sense, and the result is that much uncalled for prejudice or bias has been engendered against Shankara's philosophy, especially in the minds of those persons whose outlook is predominantly materialistic and who do not like to be told that all their precious possessions and dear and near relations are in reality so many unreal things only.

Shankara, as we shall see, never confused between subjective and objective existence. He did not regard the objective world as unreal for practical and moral purposes, and carefully distinguished it from dreams and other illusory appearances. He was a formidable opponent not only of Vijñānavādīn and Shūnya-vādīn Buddhists, but of all Buddhists alike, and he left no stone unturned in criticizing them and in virtually driving their religion out of India. It is, therefore, very unfair to call him a Buddhist or to regard his philosophy as *mayavāda* in its current sense. So, in our opinion, the use of the term *mayavāda* for Shankara's philosophy should be avoided, for it is very difficult to dissociate this term from the sense which it was originally intended by Bhaskaracharya to convey and with which it has been so long associated.

It is, of course, not infrequently that the word 'maya' occurs in Shankara's works. But varied are the senses in which it has been used by him. No doubt, at places it is used in the sense of illusory appearances also; but it is not its primary sense. Primarily it was employed to connote the mysterious power of the all-mighty Creator and Lord of the world. And it is in this sense that the word 'maya' may be said to have played an important part in Shankara's philosophy also. But it is difficult to keep this sense apart from its other senses. In case Shankara's philosophy is designated as *mayavāda* there is every likelihood of these senses being confused, and, thereby, of the arousal of misleading misconceptions about it.

Moreover, 'maya' even as the mysterious power of the Supreme Lord is not the last word with Shankara. It is neither a self-existent and independent reality nor the goal of human aspirations. On the other hand,

1 The Vedānta of Shankara, p. 371.

It is something that deserves to be discarded and got rid of. So to call Shankara's philosophy mayavada is to exalt 'maya' to a status of which it is hardly worthy. To propound maya can never be said to be the true end of Shankara's philosophical speculations. It is not maya but Brahman with which they are really concerned. Throughtout his extensive writings it is the realization of the latter, and not of the former, that is really aimed at. And whenever 'maya' is brought in, it is not with a view to make his reader realize its importance or value but in order to direct his mind towards the realization of his all-important Brahman. Brahman, with Shankara, is the only true reality, Brahman with Shankara is the whole and sole ultimate ground and support of all, and Brahman with Shankara is the only worthy end of human life. It is, therefore, quite desirable to call his philosophy Brahnavada. The term mayavada is rather a misnomer for it.

6—Tentative Justification for applying the epithet Brahnavada to Shankara's Philosophy

A system of philosophy is generally named, and should be named, after its most conspicuous and characteristic feature, or after the ultimate principle or entity that it propounds, and the names of the various 'isms' of western philosophy—materialism, idealism, realism, 'monism, dualism, pluralism, theism, deism, pantheism, pragmatism and the like—are so many instances of so naming it. Shankara's philosophy, therefore, should be called Brahnavada, for Brahman is indubitably the most fundamental concept of it. For instance, it has been held therein that: 'Brahman is that by knowing which there remains nothing worth knowing'.¹ The knowledge of Brahman is exceedingly brighter than any other knowledge; it is the greatest purifier, the purifier of all purifiers.² The learned are they who dwell in the knowledge of the one immutable Brahman.³ The knowers of Brahman (alone) are wise.⁴ Brahman, the absolute and perfect being, the pure consciousness and the pure bliss, is alone the subject and the final goal of all the Upanishads, which do not propound Ajnana, maya, etc., for the propounding of them cannot be deemed as serving any fruitful purpose.⁵ All persons should always rest in the non-dual Brahman by having in their own self an immediate cognition of it.⁶ It is Brahman alone, and not the material or unconscious duality which is propounded

1 Atma-bodha, 55.

2 SBG., 9.2,

3 SBG., 5.18.

4 SBG., 4, 19

5 Siddhantamuktavali, p. 15.

6 Tattvopadesha, 48.

by the Vedantas. The non-dual Brahman which is of the nature of consciousness is pure bliss; whereas the unreal unconscious is by its very nature a source of sufferings. 1 By knowing Brahman as their own (true) self the wise become immortal. 2 Shankara's works, in fact, are full of such dignifying utterings about Brahman and its knowledge. Many of them we shall be referring to in their appropriate contexts. Here it should suffice to say that all the logical, ontological, ethical and other considerations of his philosophy favour the application of the appellation 'Brahmavada' to it. And if we look into Shankara's own writings for enlightenment on this point, we feel perfectly justified in making this choice.

Shankara, we find, has not even once called his philosophy 'maya-vada', and its advocates, including himself, mayavadins, despite the fact that the word maya has been so freely used by him. On the other hand, he has definitely and repeatedly used the epithets Brahmavada and Brahmavadins for his philosophy and its upholders respectively. For instance, in his commentary on Brahma-sutra (II.1.29), where he has called the followers of the Sankhya-system of philosophy 'Pradhanavadins' and the advocates of Vaisheshika views 'Anuvadins', he has named the upholders of his own views Brahmavadins. and has used this term twice in his commentary on that Sutra alone.³ The term 'Brahmavadin' is again used twice in his commentary on Sutra 38 of Pada II of the same Adhyaya, and once in his commentaries on Sutras II.3.53 and II.1.6 each. Again in his introduction to the commentary on Sutra II.2.11 the term 'Brahmavadin' has occurred once, while the term 'Brahmatmavadin' has been substituted for it in his commentary on Sutra II.1.14. Then the epithet 'Brahmavada' too has been employed in his commentaries on Sutras I.1.31, I.3.41 and II.2.9. Both the terms Brahmavadin and Brahmavada occur in his Aparokshanubhuti⁴ also, and the former in his commentary on the Shvetashvatara Upanishad as well. 5 In his commentary on Kena Upanishad⁶ Shankara has also used, for his school of thought, the term 'Brahmavitsampradaya' the meaning of which is quite similar to that of the term 'Brahmavadins.'

It is no use to multiply these instances. The few that we have mentioned should suffice to show that Shankara himself named his system of philosophy 'Brahmavada', and that he would like it to be called by this name rather than by any other appellation.

1 Ibid. 49.

2. SB. Kena Up.. 1.2

3 SBS. II. 1. 29.

4 Ap. 109 and 128

5 SB. Shvet; Up. I.1 and 3.2I

6 SB. Kena up II. 1

Prof. Raghavendrachar, in his book, 'Dvaita Philosophy and Its Place in The Vedanta', proposes to call all Vedanta philosophy 'Brahmadvaita'¹, and Pt. Brij Behari Lal Shastri, in his article, 'Badarayana's Brahmsutra'², has preferred to use for Vedanta philosophy, the term 'Eka Brah-mavada.' Both these suggestions are, of course, similar to our own, so far as they have a bearing on Shankara's system of philosophy; but there seems to be no specific purpose served by adding the word 'advaita' or 'eka' to the word 'brahma', since the very etymological meaning of the word 'brahma' implies the oneness of Brahma, the absolute Reality.

It cannot but be admitted that the terms 'Brahma' and 'Atma' are, strictly speaking, synonymous terms with Shankara and that the perfect identity of one's true Self with Brahma is the most fundamental tenet of his philosophy, and also that, at places, he has used the term 'Atmavadin' as a substitute for the term 'Brahmavadin.' So, apparently there seems to be nothing wrong in calling him an Atmavadin and his philosophy Atmavada. But the term 'Atma' is not usually taken in its ultimate sense. More often than not it is used for an individual self, and; sometimes, also for the mind and body of an individual. As a matter of fact Shankara himself has used it in all these senses. So to use the term 'Atmavada' for his philosophy would mean to expose it to an unnecessary hazard of misconception. For if so named, it is likely to be mistaken as subjective idealism, solipsism, egoism etc. It is, therefore, not desirable to replace the designation 'Brahmavada' by the term 'Atmavada.'

Advaitavada or Advaita³ (non-dualism) is, of course, another epithet that is sometimes used for Shankara's philosophy, and it cannot be denied that it is virtually an advaita philosophy. The Brahma of Shankara is undoubtedly a non-dual Being. But the word 'advaitavada' is ambiguous. It may as much mean materialistic monism as idealistic or spiritualistic one. As to what it really stands for the word "advaita" says nothing. The name 'Brahmavada', therefore, is definitely preferable to the appellation 'Advaitavada', for it is not only free from ambiguity, but is also more expressive than the latter, in so far as it explicitly states the name of the one ultimate Reality of Shankara and at the sametime indicates something of its nature too.

The other names that are in use for Shankara's philosophy are 'The Vedanta of Shankara', 'The Vedanta System of Shankara,' 'The Advaita

1 Dvaita Phil.; p. 10

2 Vedantanka of Kalyana (1993 V. Era), p. 124.

3 See Chatterjee & Datta: An Intro. to Indian Phil., p. 375.

Vedanta of Shankara' or 'Monistic Vedanta.' No doubt, unlike the epithet 'mayavada', all these appellations are unobjectionable. But they are certainly less significant than the term 'Brahmavada'; Brahma to Shankara is not only an ontological Reality, but more than that. It is also ethically normative. But this fact is not indicated by the term 'Vedanta', as it is done by the term 'Brahmavada'. Shankara has himself maintained that the object of all the Vedantas is to propound Brahma. And this the term 'Brahmavada' nicely brings out; but the term 'Vedanta' by itself throws no light upon it. Even Dr. R P. Singh who has designated his work on Shankara's philosophy as 'The Vedanta of Shankara', has frankly admitted the cogency of naming this philosophy as 'Brahmavada' when he says that "the term Brahmavada is much more significant than the term mayavada, because Brahman for Shankara is the highest good (Moksha) as well as the highest reality (Atman), and Brahmavada is an exposition of this"¹.

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¹ The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 372.

2

The Sources of Shankara's Brahmanavada

‘ब्रह्म वेदान्तशास्त्रादेवावगम्यते’ (शंकर)

‘अस्यैवौपनिषदस्य ज्ञानस्य सम्यग्ज्ञानत्वम्’ (शंकर)

Chapter 2

THE SOURCES OF SHANKARA'S BRAHMAVADA

1. The probable factors of influence on Shankara

Shankara, it is almost certain, was born and brought up in an orthodox family of 'Nambudri sect of Brahmins of Malabar'.¹ His exact date of birth may be a matter of dispute among scholars²; but there seems to be little doubt about his parentage and the early influences on his life. "Early in his youth he went to a Vedic school, presided over by Govinda, the pupil of Gaudapada".³ And 'even while a young boy of eight he is said to have devoured with avidity and delight all the Vedas'⁴. This clearly shows two things—one that he was a great genius and the other that it was under the influence of Vedic culture that he got his early impressions. And early impressions, we all know, are naturally very deep and lasting. Unless a person happens to be subjected to very strong and continuous impressions of opposite nature in his later life, the well-formed impressions of his earlier life have a decisive and far-reaching effect in determining his later inclinations and thoughts. But in the case of Shankara we have no evidence or reason to suspect the annihilation of his earlier impressions. All through his life Shankara continued to adore the Vedas, including the Upanishads, as ardently as any votary of them has ever done. Their influence on his views, therefore, must have been the greatest, and it is quite evident from all his works also.

It is our firm conviction that the Upanishads constitute the main source of Shankara's Brahmapada. But before we dwell upon this point, we shall first take up and consider some other agencies that must have also played some part in moulding his views and the mode of their expression. It is, however, not possible to make an exhaustive survey of all

1. S. Radhakrishnan : I. P. Vol. II, p. 448,

2. Ibid, p. 447.

3. Ibid, p. 448.

4. Ibid;

such agencies, for they are bound to be too many and of too diverse a nature to be discovered and discussed here. All the persons with whom Shankara came into contact, all the scriptures that he studied, in short, the entire atmosphere in which he breathed and moved, must have had some sort of effect, conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect, favourable or unfavourable, on him and his views. But it is neither possible nor desirable to undertake the discussion of all such influences here. We shall, therefore, content ourselves with an account of such important factors only as seem to have played a definite and distinct part in determining the nature of his Brahmanavada.

(a) The Buddhistic influence

Let us begin with the consideration of the so-believed Buddhistic influences. Those who view Shankara as a crypto-Buddhist are of opinion that Shankara's philosophy has been essentially influenced and shaped by the thoughts of Bauddha scholars. Even Dr. DasGupta who has rightly observed a number of points of difference between the Buddhistic idealism and the idealism of Shankara Vedanta¹ has willingly remarked that "There seems to be little doubt that these Upanishadic interpretations were very much influenced by the development of Buddhistic Idealism."² On the other hand, some orthodox followers of Shankara deny the Buddhistic influence on his philosophy down-right.

But on an impartial observation both these views seem to be more or less extreme. It may undoubtedly be remarked that it seems to be rather too much to think that Shankara was in no way influenced by Bauddha writers. At least in respect of his method of discussing philosophical problems Shankara must have been influenced by them. It is true that he did not imitate Nagarjuna in employing his dialectical method in the same manner and to the same extent as Shri Harsha and Citsukha did after him; all the same it cannot be said that he has not employed it. Nor can we say that he borrowed his argumentative method from the Upanishads. For so far as the Upanishads are concerned this method is conspicuous by its absence there. No doubt it can be said that the employment of the dialectical method by Shankara might have been due to the influence of Gaudapada who was his grand-teacher and with whom he associated himself by writing a commentary on his famous Karikas on the Mandukya Upanishad. But even by maintaining this the Bauddha writers' influence

1 Vide Indian Idealism (p. p. 173—180).

2 Ibid. p. 149.

on him, at least in this respect, cannot altogether be denied. For, then, he might be said to have been indirectly indebted to them, through Gaudapada himself. Directly or indirectly, in this respect at least Shankara seems to have been influenced by the writings of Nagarjuna and such other Bauddha scholars. But it is only a matter of method. One may very well employ the methods of one's opponent even. But the affinity between their methods is by no means the same as an agrément between them or their views. And similar seems to be the case with regard to Shankara and the Buddhists. There may be some superficial resemblance, and even some real resemblance too, between their views; but so far as the cardinal and characteristic features of their philosophies are concerned there are also vital differences between them. Moreover, the points in respect of which Shankara's Brahnavada may be likened to the views of the Bauddha thinkers are not either characteristically Buddhistic, but belong to almost all schools of Indian thought, or Shankara may be said to have been, in all likelihood, indebted for them to the Upanishads and not to the Buddhists. That Shankara got his inspiration from the Upanishads and not from the Bauddha thinkers seems to be almost certain. Dr. R. P. Singh seems to be right when he says that "the Vedantism of Shankara is not inspired by Buddhism and it is uninstruative to affiliate it to Idealism and Nihilism of the Buddhist type."¹

The most fundamental doctrine of Shankara's Brahnavada is the ultimate identity of every individual self with Brahma, the eternally immutable and pure consciousness. But according to the Buddhists there is no permanent self. Most of them identify it with the constantly fluctuating parallel series of mental states. Secondly, Shankara regards his Brahma as the ultimate ground and support of all empirical existence. According to him nothing exists or can exist apart from or independent of It. But such an idea is conspicuous by its absence in Buddhistic philosophy. Most of the Buddhists do not believe in any eternal and changeless 'being', conscious or unconscious; but are thorough-going propounders of the doctrine of momentariness. According to Shantarakshita, a well-known Buddhist himself, it is in respect of this point that Buddhism differs from the philosophy of the followers of the Upanishads. In the words of Dr. DasGupta Shantarakshita is said to have maintained that "...his only point of quarrel with the followers of the Upanishads was in the fact that they admitted one eternal conscious-

1 The Vedanta of Shankara, Preface, p. II.

ness as the ultimate principle, whereas he admitted only parallel series of consciousness." ¹ Even if it be granted that 'there are many important Buddhistic idealists, such as Ashvaghosha, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Sthiramati and others, who admitted one eternal consciousness as the ultimate principle' ², the difference between their idealism and Shankara's Brahnavada stands intact. For, as it has been observed by Dr. DasGupta himself, the important "...point that comes out in comparing the idealism of the Shankara school of Vedanta with that of the Buddhists is that though in Vasubandhu's idealism we find that one permanent entity as pure bliss and consciousness is admitted as the ultimate reality, as is also found in this school, yet no attempt has been made in the former to show that this ultimate principle of pure intelligence forms the basic principle of all our consciousness even in our ordinary experiences." ³ And this observation is quite in keeping with the view of Prakashatman as expressed in his Panchapadikavivarana.

According to Prakashatman, to put it in the words of Dr. DasGupta, "the great difference between the Mahayanists and the Vedantins consists in the fact that the former hold that the objects have neither any separate existence nor any independent purpose or action, while the latter hold that though the objects are in essence identical with pure consciousness, yet they can fulfil independent purposes or functions and have separate abiding and uncontradicted existence" ⁴

Besides this, it has got to be remembered that the admission of the one ultimate principle of eternal consciousness is, in fact, incompatible with the doctrine of universal momentariness. Vasubandhu and others, it appears, were influenced by the Upanishadic notion of Brahma, and, thus being convinced of the untenability of the Buddhistic doctrine of momentariness, adopted a view which, truly speaking, goes against it. So even if it be taken as a point of resemblance between Shankara and Vasubandhu, etc., the former cannot be said to be indubitably indebted to the latter. The more plausible view, in fact, would be to regard both of them as being indebted to the Upanishads, of which, as we shall see in this very chapter, the idea of the eternally changeless basic principle of ubiquitous consciousness constitutes the most important characteristic feature.

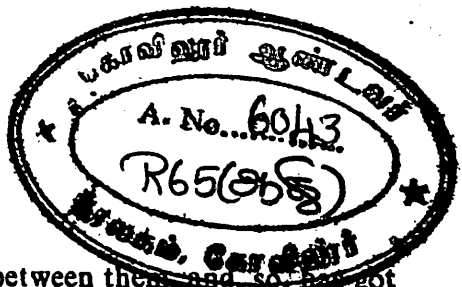
Moreover, all the Buddhists are heterodox and atheists. They believe neither in the testimony of the Vedic texts nor in the existence of the all-mighty and omniscient God; while Shankara believes in both of them.

1 . Indian Idealism, p. 149.

2 Ibid

3 Ibid, p. 173.

4 Ibid, p. 174.



It is really a very vital point of difference between them, and so we got to be borne in mind before calling Shankara a crypto-Buddhist and regarding his philosophy as essentially Buddhistic in nature.

Then, the doctrine of 'Causal Efficiency' (arthakriyakaritva) which may rightly be regarded as a very important feature of Buddhistic philosophy, and according to which 'the Criterion of the existence of a thing consists in its capacity to bring about an effect'¹, is not at all acceptable to Shankara. According to Shankara even non-existent things may sometimes produce an actual effect. For example, actual death of a person is sometimes caused by imaginary poison (i e. due to the mere idea of having been bitten by a poisonous snake)² In his opinion, therefore, arthakriyakaritva or causal efficiency is no criterion of reality or real existence.

According to the Buddhists a necessary implication of their doctrine of causal efficiency is the momentariness of all things, which, in turn, is said to imply the identity of an object and its awareness. But Shankara has vehemently criticized both these views.³ Padmapada, a follower of Shankara, has also tried to show the absurdity of the doctrine of Causal Efficiency by maintainig that "... if causal efficiency means the productivity of its own awareness, then no awareness or idea has existence, for it does not produce any other knowledge of itself, and the awareness of one cannot be known by others except by inference, which again would not be direct cognition. If causal efficiency means the production of another moment, then the last moment having no other moment to produce would itself be non-existent; and if the last moment is proved to be non-existent, then necessarily all the other moments would be non-existent. Existence is a nature of things, and even when the thing remains after an operation, it does not on that account cease to exist."⁴

No doubt, there are a number of common points between Buddhism and Brahnavada. For example, both believe in the inexorable moral law of Karma, in liberation, and in selfcontrol, meditation and moral discipline as necessary means to it, and both have recognized the value of initial spiritual discontent as an essential first step to proceed in the direction of eternal equipoise and peace. But on this ground also we cannot regard Buddhism as the basis of Shankara's Brahnavada. As a matter of fact,

1 Sarvadarshanasangraha : Bauddha-darshanam—13.

2 Vide SBS: II. 1. 14.

3 Sec SBS. II. 2. 20-27 and II. 2. 28-31; and chapter VI.

4 Indian Idealism, p.p. 175-76.

these points of resemblance between them constitute the common characteristics of almost all the systems of Indian philosophy leaving, of course, the Charvaka school apart, and may well be said to have their origin in an unknown antiquity. They are all found even in the oldest Upanishads, And so, if their definite origin is insisted on, they can confidently be said to have originated in the intuitive musings of the Upanishadic sages and not in the teachings of Gautama Buddha or his disciples. So far as these characteristics of Shankara's Brahmvada are concerned it seems to be certainly fairer to attribute them to the Upanishads than to Buddhism, especially in view of the fact that to the former Shankara has himself strongly pinned his faith while to the latter he has shown an all-round strong antipathy.

Shankara, as we shall see in chapter V, views the world and its contents as something non-permanent or transient, and so he is sometimes believed to be endorsing the Buddhistic doctrine of the momentariness of all things. But while entertaining such a view we have got to remember that Shankara has openly subjected the Buddhistic doctrine of momentariness to a vehement criticism¹, and has never expressed any sympathy with it. To think that Shankara subscribed to the Buddhistic doctrine of momentariness by holding the world to be non-permanent is to think that he openly contradicted his own thesis by criticizing it. But it is not a fair attribute to a great logician like Shankara. Shankara's view of the world as a non-permanent entity is not the same as the Buddhists' doctrine of momentariness. To Shankara the non-permanent things cannot exist by themselves. All becoming, according to him, must have a being for its ground and support. The Buddha advocates of the doctrine of momentariness, however, do not generally feel the necessity of admitting a changeless being to support and explain their momentary events. Even those of them, Asanga, Vasubandhu and others, who could not help to do so failed to affiliate them properly with their principle of ultimate consciousness. So, even in this respect, Shankara cannot be said to owe a debt to Buddhists. As a matter of fact, as we shall shortly see, he owed this debt too, like many others, to the Upanishads themselves which have unanimously spoken of the world as ephemeral (*adhruva*, *adraddha*) and have held Brahma, the ultimate Being, to be the only final cause of its origin, subsistence, etc. The very first 'mantra' of the Isha Upanishad has described the world and all its contents as being subject to change and as being pervaded by its Lord who is, later on, said to be perfectly immutable (*anejadekam*).

1 See SBS. II, 2, 20-27.

Sometimes Shankara is believed to be indebted to Nagarjuna, the well-known Madhyamika Buddhist, for his classification of existence into Pratibhasika, Vyavaharika and Paramarthika sattās (illusory, pragmatic and real existences) as distinguished from absolute non-existence. No doubt, Nagarjuna had attempted a similar classification of existence before Shankara. To him, as to Shankara, "...there is not only the ultimate truth (Paramartha; there is also the relative truth of the phenomenal world (loka-samvriti-satya); there are, further, the sense-illusions, hallucinations and the like (aloka-samvriti or mithyasamvrita) which are contradicted in ordinary experience and also that which is merely non-existent, like the hare's horn."¹ So the guess that Shankara might have borrowed his classification of existence from Nagarjuna does not seem to be altogether baseless. But if we take into consideration the difference between the terminology the two scholars have employed and also the fact that such a classification is, in fact, suggested by some of the Upanishads themselves, it may as well be said that both Nagarjuna and Shankara got their clues from the Upanishads independently and expressed them in their own ways. Have not similar discoveries sometimes been made by different persons independently? It is not at all a matter of surprise if similar ideas are engendered by similar conditions in the minds of two different thinkers. It is, therefore certainly more desirable to ascribe Shankara's indebtedness to the Upanishads which he revered than to nihilist Nagarjuna for whose views he had a definite aversion.

In fact, the distinction between illusory appearances and empirical existence, both as different from absolute non-existence, is a matter of common experience, and must have ever been made by all men of common-sense. It does not require any special talent or insight to distinguish between them. The question is only about the distinction between empirical existence and ontological reality; and with this every conscientious reader of Chhandogya Upanishad, to mention one Upanishad only, must feel struck when he finds the words 'vacharambhanam' (meaning an object of speech only) and 'satyam' (meaning real) as used for the effects and causes respectively.²

Moreover, there are points of vital difference between Nagarjuna and Shankara. In the words of Prof. A. C. Mukerji, "The world of appearance for Shankara, is not entirely false; Being is immanent in the world of appearance. On the contrary, Nagarjuna's conception does not

¹ HIP. Vol. II, p. 5.

² Chhand. Up. 6. 1. 4-6; see also 6. 2, 1-2.

leave any reality for the phenomenal world which, for him, is as unreal as the horn of a hare.'¹ In the very introduction to his commentary on the Brahma-sutras Shankara has openly declared that 'all the vedantas commence with the object of providing a positive proof for the oneness of the individual and the universal Self'²; but a similar declaration has never been made by Nagarjuna. As a matter of fact, any such declaration would be incompatible with his through and through negative dialectic.

Thus, we may conclude that it is not very fair to view Shankara and his Brahmapada as being essentially indebted to Buddhism or its exponents. The point in respect of which he may most probably be said to be distinctly indebted to them seems to be the employment of the dialectical method. So far as his philosophical views are concerned their origin may more plausibly and justly be traced to the Upanishads and other orthodox texts to which he has himself repeatedly referred than to the writings of the Buddhists in criticizing whom he has left no stone unturned.

(b) Yogavasishtha :—

Although Shankara's works contain no explicit reference to the Yogavasishtha, this work also seems to have had a definite influence on his views, and that especially in connection with his views about the nature of Brāhma and its ontological identity with the individual self.³ "A careful and comparative study," as says Dr. B. L. Atreya, "of the poetical works of Shankara, particularly the Vivekachudamani, the Aparokshanubhuti, and the Shata-Shloki, with the Yogavasishtha will clearly show that Shankara was not only influenced by the Yogavasishtha but he also thoroughly imbibed its teachings, and in many places composed almost literally identical verses and gave expression to almost the same ideas,"⁴ Dr. Atreya has very assiduously discovered quite a large number of 'very strikingly similar verses' from the Yogavasishtha and Shankara's works and has given them in the foot-notes on p. p. 29-31 of his work entitled, 'The Yogavasishtha and Its Philosophy.' A perusal of these verses cannot fail to convince the reader of the great influence that Yogavasishtha seems to have exercised on the mind of Shankara. No doubt, if the author of the Yogavasishtha were not definitely known to

1 The Nature of Self, p. p. 303-304.

2 SBS: Introduction (आत्मैकत्वविद्याप्रतिपत्तये -- आरभ्यन्ते ।)

3 Vide Yogavasishtha, 3.7.20; 3.119.23; 4.22.25; 4.22.33; 5.43.26.

4 Yv. Phil., p. 29.

have lived before Shankara, it could also be opined, on the basis of this clear-cut resemblance between them, that he was influenced by Shankara and not Shankara by him. But Dr. Atreya has left no room for any doubt about his precedence. And his view has been gladly acquiesced in by prominent orientalists like Dr. A. B. Keith and Schrader.¹ In his opinion "the present Yogavasishtha must have been composed before the time of Bhartrihari and after that of Kalidasa, i. e., in the sixth century, A.D."² According to Dr. DasGupta "The date of the Yogavasishtha.....cannot be later than the seventh or eighth century."³ In any case it is definitely a work of pre-Shankarite age. So the striking similarity between it and some of the verses of Shankara can conveniently and justly be explained only by accepting Shankara's indebtedness to it.

(c) Gaudapada

That Shankara's philosophical views must have been influenced by Gaudapada cannot but be admitted. No doubt, there is some difference of opinion among scholars about Shankara's exact relation with him. Some hold him to be the teacher of Shankara's teacher namely Govinda, while others regard him as his own teacher,⁴ although "In all his works, Shankara subscribes himself as the pupil of Govinda."⁵ But there can be hardly any difference of opinion with regard to Gaudapada's influence on him. The very fact that Shankara undertook to write a commentary on his Mandukya-Karika, and thus to associate himself with him, is adequate enough to show that he endorsed at least some of the fundamental ideas of his predecessor. Both Gaudapada and Shankara believe in the true reality of Brahma alone. To Gaudapada, as to Shankara, "It is the One that is ultimately real",⁶ and Gaudapada, like Shankara, 'agrees with those who hold that there is no coming into being', meaning thereby that the true being can never 'by its own nature suffer change',⁷ and that which suffers change cannot be a real 'being.' So, says Gaudapada, "A thing that exists neither in the beginning nor

1 Vide Yv. Phil., p. 38, foot-notes.

2 Ibid. p. 38.

3 Indian Idealism, p. 154.

4 Ibid. p. 149.

5 Indian Phil., p. 448; see also AHIP., p. 444.

6 Indian Idealism, p. 150 and Mand. Karika, I. 17.

7 Ibid. p. 151.

in the end is just the same (non-being) even at present.¹ And this is what Shankara would also hold. According to him as well, as we shall see in the next chapter, the truly real is the eternally unalterable or immutable alone.

Again, according to Gaudapada and Shankara both, the self of an individual is ultimately identical with the Absolute Reality, the Brahma. In its true or essential nature it 'is subject to neither dissolution or destruction nor to creation or birth; it is neither enchained nor an aspirant after liberation, nor even, strictly speaking, ever liberated'.²

Also the fact that Shankara has sometimes supported some of his views by making reference to Gaudapada's Karikas, shows that at least in respect of such views he has been influenced by Gaudapada. For example, in his commentary on Brahma-Sutra (II. 1. 9) he refers to Mandukya-Karika (I. 16) and thereby identifies his view with that of its author.

Then, Gaudapada's influence on Shankara's writings is particularly palpable in respect of the application of the term 'maya' to empirical existence. No doubt, Shankara has primarily used this term for the mysterious power by means of which the Almighty Lord projects or creates the objective world;³ but the fact that he has also used it for the world itself cannot be denied. And this seems to be largely due to the influence of Gaudapada on him who has made use of this term in as many as fifteen verses of his Karikas, and in some even twice.⁴ This, however, cannot obliterate the fact that while Gaudapada "tends towards subjectivism.....Shankara is uncompromising in his anti-subjectivism"⁵ All the same it has got to be admitted that Gaudapada must have exercised some influence on Shankara's views.

(d) Other influences:—

According to Shankara the world which is of the nature of becoming has Brahma, the Absolute Being, for its ultimate ground and support; but, all the same, this becoming is said not to affect in the least its underlying Being. The Being which is self-existent and absolutely changeless cannot by its very nature allow itself to suffer any change. The world is thus viewed to be only an appearance of the absolute Being and not as a

1 Mand. Karika, 2. 6.

2 Mand. Karika, 2. 32, and Shankara's Commentary on it.

3 C/6 Chapter V.

4 Mand. Karika, 1. 7, 16, 17; 2. 12, 19, 31; 3. 19, 24, 27, 28, 29; 4. 58, 59, 61 and 69.

5 A HIP. p. 535; see chapter VI.

real transformation of it. This view of Shankara has been designated as 'Vivartavada' and the term 'vivarta' has been used by Shankara himself. But the term 'vivarta' does not occur in any of the recognized sources of his philosophy. Nor can we say that Shankara was himself the originator of this term, for the term had already been used by Bhavabhuti, who ".....could not have borrowed it", as it has been rightly observed by Dr. B.L. Atreya, "from Shankara, as modern scholars place him at the end of the 7th century, A. D. "¹ So a monistic philosophy like that of Shankara must have been in existence before the time of Bhavabhuti and the term 'vivarta' must have been used by some writer or writers on it.

Mr. A. Gough has given expression to the view that to Shankara his Vedanta doctrine "...was handed down by an unbroken series of teachers intervening between him and the Sutrakara."² One may not see quite eye to eye with Mr. Gough; but it seems to be quite reasonable to believe that there must have been some writer or writers on monistic philosophy who used the term 'vivarta' before Shankara and by whose views Shankara was influenced in some measure at least.

As a matter of fact, the view that he was indebted to some thinkers or writers other than those that have been so far mentioned here, is indicated by Shankara's own commentary on the Brahma-Sutras. For instance, in his commentary on Sutras 20 to 22 of the Fourth Pada, of the First Adhyaya, reference has been made to the views of three ancient teachers with regard to the relation of the individual soul to Brahma. Of these three teachers, Ashmarathya, Audulomi and Kashakritsna, the last is said to uphold "the doctrine that the soul is absolutely non-different from Brahma, which in some way or other presents itself as the individual soul"³, and it is essentially the view that has been maintained by Shankara himself. In Sutras 7 to 14 of the Third Pada, of the Fourth Adhyaya, mention has been made of the views of Jaimini and Badari, and Shankara has clearly endorsed the view of the latter that the soul of one who is in possession of the lower knowledge of Brahma goes after death to the Lower Brahma and not to the Highest Brahma itself. These instances clearly show that Shankara was positively influenced by teachers like Kashakritsna and Badari, the details of whose views have been unfortunately lost to us.

1 Vv. Phil., p. 34.

2 Thibaut's Intro. to his Trans. of the Vedanta-sutras. p. XVIII.

3 Ibid, p. XIX.

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2 Thibaut's Intro. to his Trans. of the Vedanta-sutras. p. XVIII.

3 Ibid, p. XIX.

(d) (i) Bhartrihari

Dr. Das Gupta has rightly maintained that—“the interpretations of the Upanishads on the monistic line had already been made by various writers long before Shankara”¹. And even his ‘vivarta’ view of causation, which, in the opinion of Dr. Das Gupta, ‘could be regarded as in some sense original’² was “not only anticipated by some forms of Vedavada view which preceded Shankara, but also by Bhartrihari, who preceded Shankara by about a century, in his Bakyapadiya”³. As to Bhartrihari’s philosophy it may briefly be said that in it only “...one being or reality as Brahman is regarded as the ultimate truth and everything else is considered to be mere appearances. So far as these appearances were concerned Bhartrihari was quite willing to accept the ordinary realistic view... .., but from the ultimate point of view Bhartrihari would not for a moment admit the existence of anything else but the ultimate being. Bhartrihari thinks that it is by the power of Brahman that all these various manifestations, such as individual subjects, the objects and all the relations that appear, have to be explained, yet that power is not in its nature different from the nature of Brahman”⁴. Now, in saying all this Bhartrihari really appears to be anticipating Shankara’s Brahnavada. And this assertion of ours, I think, will be duly justified by a perusal of our subsequent account of it. So in view of this fundamental affinity between them it is not at all unreasonable to maintain that Shankara’s view of Brahma must have been in some measure influenced also by Bhartrihari’s writings.

(d) (ii) Smritis : especially Bhagavadgita

That the orthodox scriptures of secondary authority (smritis), such as Manusmriti, Mahabharata and Shrimadbhagavadgita, must have had some hand in shaping Shankara’s views seems to be amply evident from his own works themselves. The very fact that he has repeatedly cited them in support of his views clearly evinces their hold on him. In his commentary on the Brahma-Sutras alone there are in no case less than forty-nine references to Shrimadbhagavadgita⁵, and his commentaries on

1. Indian Idealism, p. 195.

2. Ibid. p. 196.

3. Indian Idealism, p. 196.

4. Ibid.

5. C/O SBS. 1.1.4, 5, 11, 20, 26; 1.2.2, 6, 12, 16; 1.3.19, 23; 1.4.22; 2.1.1, 6, 14, 34, 2.2.10; 3.2.37, 41; 3.3.31, 32, 59; 3.4.20, 34, 38, 40, 47, 51; 4.1.2, 10, 12; 4.2.20, 21 and 4.4.20.

the Brahma-Sutras and Bhagavadgita conjointly contain at least as many as fourteen references to the Mahabhartā¹ and ten to Manusmṛiti². There are, of course, quotations from other Smritis as well, such as Jabala Smṛiti³, Gautama Smṛiti⁴, etc.; but their number is comparatively small. Any way the influence on him of such orthodox scriptures as are believed to be in conformity with the Shrutis or Vedic literature is adequately evident from his appeal to their authority.

II. The Main Source, the Upanishads

It is, however, the Upanishads which really constitute the main source of Shankara's Brahmapada. They are, I think, the most potent factor of all such factors as seem to have exercised their influence in shaping his fundamental Philosophical ideas. And the soundness of this belief is amply borne out by all available evidence both internal and external.

In the first place, it may be urged that Shankara has himself regarded the Upanishads as the highest and the only independent authority^{4*} with regard to the knowledge of Brahma which is beyond sense-perception and the propounding of which may undoubtedly be said to be the main object of his Brahmapada. For instance, he has explicitly stated that 'the ultimate Self or Brahma is to be known from the Vedānta (i. e. the Upanishads) only'⁵, and that 'the Brahma has for its source the Shabda (Upanishads, lit. word)⁶. According to him 'Brahma is (a property) of the Upanishads (exclusively)'⁷. 'There is in reality', says he, 'only One which is of the nature of eternal purity, knowledge and freedom, and this One can be approached or known through the Upanishads alone'⁸. 'The knowledge contained in the Upanishads is the complete or perfect knowledge'⁹. Now, these and many other such assertions of

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1. C/6 SBS: I. 3.24 and II. 1.1 and SBG. II. 21,28; III (Intro.). 4 : VI. 3, 4 XII. 19; XIII. 2; XVIII. 55, 66.
 2. C/6 SBS. I. 2.19; I. 3.28,36; II. 1.1,11, and SBG. III. 14; VI. 4 & XV. 20.
 3. See SBS. I. 2.32; III. 4.20 and 40.
 4. SBG 5. 18.
 - 4*. SBS. II. 1. 1. (Translation mine).
 5. SBS. (Intro.).
 6. SBS. II. 1.27.
 7. SB. Kena Up. (Intro.).
 8. Siddhanta-muktavali, p. 23.
 9. SBS. II, 1.11.

Shankara clearly show his profound reverence for these ancient scriptures and point to the great influence which they must have exercised on his mind.

In his commentary on Brahma-Sutra I. 1.4 Shankara has definitely rejected the view that Brahma, the main object of his enquiry (and as such the most fundamental concept of his philosophy), can be known through other sources different from the Upanishads. There he has considered the objection that 'it is not correct to say that the true Self or Brahma is known from the Upanishads only, for it is an object of self-consciousness'¹, and has maintained that the object of self-consciousness is the witness of one's own mental processes only, it is not known as the Self of all and as residing in all beings (i. e. as true Self or Brahma). And then, by adducing an extract from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, which declares that the true Self or Brahma belongs to the Upanishads², he has tried to evince to his opponent that the adjunct 'aupanishad' (belonging to the Upanishads) would be apt only if the Brahma or Self be said to be known through the Upanishads mainly³. In the opinion of Shankara it is the purport of the Upanishads that has been propounded in the Bhagavadgita⁴ and other scriptures of secondary authority, and in case these scriptures are found to hold a view which does not tally with that of the Upanishads their authority with regard to that view is not to be accepted⁵.

Moreover, the very fact that Shankara undertook to write commentaries on all the principal Upanishads and the Brahma-Sutras, which are believed to contain only a consolidated exposition of the Upanishads, themselves, clearly goes to show that he was anxious to propound and spread their views and to associate his own views with them. His writings, therefore, are to be treated as a mere elaboration or exposition or systematization of the views of the Upanishads as he understood them. And the numerous references that he has made to these Upanishads in his commentaries on the Bhagavadgita and Brahma-Sutras should leave no doubt in our minds about the enormous influence they wielded on him. In these two commentaries alone there are no less than fourteen hundred and fifty references to them. The Chhandogya Upanishad alone has been quoted nearly six hundred times, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, at least four hundred and eighty times, the Taittiriya one hundred and ten, the

1. SBS. I. 1.4.

2. SB. Br. Up. III. 9.26.

3. SBS. I. 1.4.

4. SBG, III. 16.

5. SBS. II. 1.1,

Mundaka one hundred, the Katha nearly ninety, and the Shvetashvatara nearly sixty times. There are quotations from and references to other Upanishads as well; but their number is comparatively small, and we need not mention it. What has been shown is quite enough to demonstrate our point that the influence of the Upanishads on Shankara's Brahmayada is the greatest. It is therefore quite reasonable and just to treat them as its main source. And that they should be so treated is, in fact, the opinion of many an eminent orientalist too.

In the opinion of Prof. Paul Deussen the philosophy of Shankara bears the same relation to the philosophy of the Upanishads as does a fruit to its flower. He has so beautifully expressed it that it is worthwhile to give here his own words. He says that "On the tree of Indian wisdom there is no fairer flower than the Upanishads, and no finer fruit than the Vedanta philosophy. This system grew out of the teachings of the Upanishads, and was brought to its consummate form by the great Shankara."¹ According to Prof. Max Muller as well, the Upanishads contain almost all the germs of Shankara's philosophy. While speaking about it he says that "When we consider how abstruse many of these metaphysical ideas are which form the substance of the Vedanta philosophy, it is most interesting to see how Shankara succeeds in discovering them all, or at all events their germs, in the ancient Upanishads.....we cannot deny that the germs of many of the most recondite thoughts of Vedanta metaphysicians are really there imbedded in the Upanishads."² Elsewhere he has maintained that "The most extra-ordinary feature of this Vedanta philosophy consists.....in its being an independent system of philosophy, yet entirely dependent on the Upanishads."³ The same in fact can be said to be the view of Prof. Ranade when he maintains that "The Vedanta philosophy stands to the Upanishads almost in the same relation in which the philosophy of the Schoolmen stood to Aristotle."⁴ According to him the Upanishads along with the Brahmasutras and the Bhagavadgita are the 'foundation stones' upon which is based 'the whole of the philosophy of Vedanta.'⁵ But the Brama-Sutra being only 'an aphoristic summary of the doctrines of the Upanishads'⁶, and the Gita also propounding the truths already contained in them, not only according to Shankara

1 Outlines of the Vedanta System of Phil., Preface.

2 Three Lectures on the Vedanta Phil., p. p. 135-36.

3 Ibid. p. 31.

4 A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Phil. p. 5.

5 Ibid. p. 205.

6 Ibid. p. 5.

but according to almost all orthodox people, it is quite reasonable to regard the Upanishads themselves as the main source of Shankara's Brahmovada.

Nothing to say of Shankara's Brahmovada alone, the Upanishads are sometimes looked upon as the fountain head of almost all the latter Indian philosophy. "The thinkers of India in all ages", says Edmond Holmes, "have turned to the Upanishads as to the fountain head of Indian speculative thought"¹. They are, in the words of Prof. Radhakrishnan, "the foundations on which most of later philosophies and religions of India rest"². "There is no important form of Hindu thought, heterodox Buddhism included", says Bloomfield, which is not rooted in the Upanishads"³. We may not go to the length of endorsing this view in its entirety; but so far as its bearing on Shankara's Brahmovada is concerned there seems to be no doubt about its truth. And this truth is adequately borne out if we compare the fundamental ideas of Shankara's Brahmovada with those of the Upanishads. It is therefore quite desirable that before we pass on to the study of Shankara's Brahmovada itself we should have a brief but comprehensive survey of the central ideas contained in the Upanishads themselves. But before we do so let us turn to a possible misunderstanding which is likely to arise from what has been evidently stressed here. And it is to view Shankara as a blind follower of these ancient texts. As a matter of fact it is not seldom that Shankara's heavy indebtedness to the Upanishads has been so interpreted. But there is ample evidence to show that, strictly speaking, Shankara was not a blind follower of any person or texts whatsoever.

(III) Shankara, not a blind follower of the Upanishads—

A blind follower of a person or a book does not exercise his own judgement. On the other hand, he takes their assertions, right or wrong, quite literally. He does not care for their consistency or coherence, but subscribes to them as they come to him. So far as at least these assertions are concerned his critical faculty remains almost completely dormant, and he follows them without raising any objection or doubt with regard to their cogency. But we find quite a different case with Shankara. His attitude, as we shall see, is just the attitude of a true seeker of truth. No doubt he has a great faith in the authority of the Vedic texts; but his faith in them is not irrational or blind. It is not only founded on reasons; it also ever remains open to it.

1 Intro. to 'The Phil. of the Up.' by S. Radhakrishnan, p. 2.

2 The Phil. of the Upanishads', p. 14.

The Religion of the Veda, p. 51.

Shankara's interpretations of the Upanishads are far from being always literal. Wherever a popular meaning does not seem to him to suit the general spirit of the texts he spares no pains in unearthing the right meaning, however far-fetched it may appear to be. In this respect, indeed, he seems to be actuated by the Biblical saying that 'the spirit saveth and the letter killeth.' To take only two instances of it, the reader of his works will do well to look to his interpretations of the words 'deva' and 'asura' occurring in 'Shruti' I, section II, Adhyaya I of the Chhandogya Upanishad, and of the terms 'viya' and 'avidya' occurring in 'mantras' 9, 10 and 11 of Ishopanishad.

Now, we all very well know the popular meanings of all these words; but with a view to saving the general spirit of the Upanishadic texts Shankara has deemed it to be desirable to interpret them quite differently. The terms 'deva' and 'asura' have been taken by him to mean such tendencies or activities of our senses (including intellect) as are of the nature of light and darkness respectively. The former are said to be those which are capable of sifting the true meaning or object of the scriptures from the wrong one (i. e. those which distinguish between good and bad, and right and wrong); whereas the latter are said to be those which are unable to do so.¹ In our own way we may view the former as our inner-light, conscience or reason and identify the latter with our instinctive animal tendencies. And this clearly shows Shankara's broad-mindedness and penetrating insight employed in interpreting the texts he has undertaken to comment upon. Similarly, the words 'Avidya' and 'Vidya' are not, in the commentaries concerned, taken by him in the ordinary senses of ignorance and knowledge in general, but in the sense of actions, such as the performance of sacrificial rites, and the knowledge of the gods connected with such actions, respectively.² And this is certainly not the attitude of a blind follower.

To a casual reader the Upanishads may apparently seem to contain somewhat inconsistent accounts of the creation of the world; for some of them mention the ether³, some the elemental fire⁴ and some the vital air (Prana)⁵, etc., as the first object of God's creation. But Shankara very conveniently and ingeniously explains, or explains away, this inconsistency by opining that the real purpose of the Upanishads is to propound Brahma as the ultimate origin of all things, and not the fact of

1 SB. Chh. Up., I. 2. 1.

2 SB. Isha Up. 9, 8.

3 Tait. Up., II. 1.

4 Chh. Up., VI. 2. 3.

5 Prashna Up., III. 3.

creation as such.¹ And so far as this ultimate origin of things is concerned all the Vedantas, Shankara says, propound it to be one and the same Brahma or consciousness², and there is no difference of opinion between them with regard to this ultimate origin or Creator.³ Whether in so meeting the charge of inconsistency against the Upanishads Shankara is right or not is not the point at issue here. What concerns us at present is only the consideration of the question; Is Shankara a blind-follower of the Upanishads? And the way in which he has tried to handle their seemingly divergent accounts of creation gives us a clear hint as to its answer. And knowing as we do that a critical interpretation or evaluation of a text is beyond a blind follower of it we cannot but answer it in the negative: How can Shankara who regards intellect as a means of illuminating all things, like a lamp in darkness⁴ be a blind follower of any person or text?

The fact that Shankara was not a blind follower of the Upanishads is also indicated by his treatment of that 'mantra' (Verse) of Shvetashvatara Upanishad in which the sage Kapil has been spoken of as having been created in the very beginning of the creation and as having been endowed with manifold knowledge by the supreme Lord himself.⁵ The bare fact that the Shvetashvatara Upanishad has so eulogized the sage Kapil is not adequate enough for Shankara to regard his view of creation as correct. He rejects it because it does not satisfy his reason and confronts the view of creation as maintained in the Upanishads themselves.⁶

In Aparokshanubhuti Shankara at one place is so bold as to say that: 'I now reject the scriptural view that the deeds of former lives (Prarabdha) do not forsake a man, even when he attains the knowledge of his true Self.'⁷ But, can a blind follower of scriptures say this?

To Shankara mere scriptural knowledge is not enough. If it is to be made emancipating knowledge it has got to be duly verified through one's own direct experience, and also to be actually lived⁸. He has carefully distinguished between Jnana and Vijnana and has equally stressed the necessity of both. Jnana according to him is the knowledge of the scriptures, while Vijnana consists in making that knowledge an object of one's own direct experience⁹. And a person in whose philosophy thinking, by

1 SBS. I. 4. 14.

4 SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 7.

7 Ap., 90.

2 SBS. I. 1. 10.

5 Shvet. Up. 5. 2.

8 Vide Ap., 133.

3 SBS. I. 4. 14.

6 SBS. II. 1. 1.

9 SBG. VI. 8.

exercising one's own intellect, and verification of facts, through one's own direct experience, occupy so prominent a place as they do in Shankara's Brahmadva¹ cannot be a blind follower of any texts.

To view Shankara as a blind follower of any texts whatsoever seems to be, indeed, an instance of glaring injustice to him. How can a person who was so reasonable as he could go to the length of saying that 'even scriptures cannot make one understand what is contradictory'², be a blind follower of any scripture ? To be a blind follower is to bid good-bye to reason; but Shankara is well-known as one who 'knows how to reason accurately and logically'³, and as one who stands unparalleled among Indian philosophers in respect of 'boldness, depth and subtlety of speculation'⁴. His commentary on the Brahma-Sutras is generally recognized as being 'remarkable' not only for 'the charm of its style', but also for 'the logical consistency of its arguments'⁵. To call him a blind follower of the Upanishads, therefore, is not to have a just estimate of him. It may well be admitted that Shankara has profusely propounded the truths contained in these scriptures. But to call a spade a spade is not blind faith.

IV. The Upanishads and their contents

The word 'Upanishad' is derived from the root 'sad' by adding the prefix 'upani' to it. As such, it is taken to mean either 'that which takes a person close to God', or 'that which makes one sit just near one's teacher' (Upasanna). The second meaning is quite in conformity with the belief that the Upanishadic knowledge was imparted secretly only to the chosen few students who had the privilege of sitting quite close to their preceptors. According to Shankara the word 'Upanishad' primarily means true or perfect 'knowledge' (i. e. the knowledge of Brahman), either because it shackles or destroys (the chain of the events of) conception, birth and old age, etc. of those persons who serve or acquire it, or because it takes them to Brahma, or because the greatest good of man (viz. Brahma) resides in it⁶. When a scripture is called an Upanishad it is, as says Shankara, only in a secondary sense, and that because it contains this emancipating knowledge or because it has Brahma for its subject-matter⁷. This interpretation of the word 'Upanishad' gives us a suffi-

1 Vide Tattvopadesha, 82, 83.

2 SBS. II. 1.27.

3 Three Lectures on the Vedanta Phil., p. 45.

4 Thibaut's Intro. to his Trans. of the Vedanta-Sutras, p. XIV.

5 Hiriyanna : Outlines of Indian Phil. p. 339.

6 SB. Tait, Up. Introduction,

7 Ibid.

ciently clear clue as to what Shankara himself deems to be the central theme of these scriptures. And, as we shall soon see, he seems to be quite justified in taking this general view of them.

The exact number and time of these sacred texts is a matter of great difference of opinion among scholars¹. But their historical dispute is of little significance for us. For, so far as our present purpose is concerned both the number and time of these scriptures are as definite as Shankara's commentaries upon them. Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Aitareya, Taittiriya, Brihadaranyaka, Chhandogya and Shvetashvatara are the generally recognized authoritative Upanishads, and as it is admitted on almost all hands Shankara commented upon all of them. And the very fact that he deemed it worth-while to comment upon them clearly shows that by his time all of them had strongly established not only their authority but antiquity too: Even if it be admitted that some Upanishads were composed when Buddhism had set in, it cannot be denied that at least the earlier ones had already been compiled before its advent, i. e. by 500 B. C.² And that is quite enough for our purposes. For, if we can trace Shankara's views to them our contention that he was mainly influenced by Upanishads and not by Buddhism will stand quite intact.

The earliest Upanishads are believed to be those which are written in prose, and they are Aitareya, Taittiriya, Brihadaranyaka and Chhandogya. Their anteriority to Buddhistic age cannot be questioned. The Upanishads which are partly in prose and partly in verse, such as the Kena Up., are said chronologically to come next, while those which are purely in verse have been viewed as the later ones, and the period of their compilation has been generally brought down to 300 B. C. There is, of course, this difference of style between them; but, as we shall see, this difference does not seem to have effected a similar difference between their general spirits. No doubt, it cannot be maintained that all the Upanishads contain one single topic or that they all agree in all their details. But so far as their general spirit or purport is concerned there seems to be a good deal of affinity between them. Opinion is, however, divided with regard to even this point.

On the one hand, we have some modern scholars according to whom the Upanishads do not present to us 'a comprehensive view' but propound

1 See HIP. Vol. I, p. 28 and 38-39; also The Phil. of the Up., p. p. 17-19,

2 See AHIP. Vol. II, p. 426,

'even contradictory views'¹, and contain 'very different lines of thought...'². On the other hand; there are the orthodox thinkers and writers on them who have viewed their contradictions and lack of comprehensiveness, either in one and the same or in different Upanishads, as superficial only. In the opinion of Shankara himself 'the Upanishads teach us one consistent systematic philosophy'³. According to him their one meaning or object is the propounding of the universal Self or Brahma⁴. Even before Shankara there were a number of commentators on the Upanishads who tried to read in them 'one uniform, systematic, dogmatic philosophy'⁵. Badarayana, the author of the Brahma-Sutras, it is believed, has attempted a comprehensive and consistent account of these very Vedic-texts; and Ramanuja and other commentators thereon and on the Upanishads, though not seeing eye to eye with each other in all important matters, agree among themselves at least in upholding, with Badarayana, the integrity and consistency of these sacred texts.

"All the Upanishads", so says Pandita Pitambara, "have for their purport, in the beginning, middle and end, the Brahma, the universal Self of all"⁶. When the central theme or meaning of a text is in dispute the Pandits in India, generally, look to six things, viz., the introductory enunciation and concluding remark, recurrence, peculiarity, purpose, praise and argumentation contained in that text, and thereby try to ascertain its true meaning⁷. Accordingly, Pt. Pitambara has employed this method and thereby has tried to show that to propound Brahma alone is the chief concern of all the Upanishads⁸.

According to Prof. Radhakrishnan "The central theme of the Upanishads.....is the search for what is true"⁹. "The teaching of the Upanishads", says Prof. Hiriyanna, "we know, is predominantly monistic"¹⁰. Shankara, we believe, would probably have no objection to any such assertion; but he would certainly not agree with Prof. Radhakrishnan when he says that the Upanishads '.....contain much that is inconsistent'¹¹.

Let us, now, look into the queries and contents of the Upanishads themselves, and thereby ascertain the validity of our view that they contain

1 Thibaut's Intro., p. IX. 2 HIP. p. 1, (Chapter XI.). 3 HIP., Chapter XI, p. 2.

4 SB. Pr. Up. IV. 5.

5 HIP., Chapter XI, p. 1.

6 Vichara-Chandrodaya, p. 303. (Eng. rendering by the author).

7 Ibid. p. 304.

8 Ibid. p. p. 310-369.

9 The Phil. of the Up., p. 26.

10 Outlines of Indian Phil., p. 336.

11 The Phil. of the Up., p. 14.

almost all the fundamental facts of Shankara's Brahmapada which may be put in a nut-shell as the following ones :—

(1) Belief in a single ultimate Reality which is called Brahma, Sat or Self, etc., and is of the nature of consciousness and pure bliss,

(2) declaration of an unqualified essential identity of the individual self with the universal Self or Brahma,

(3) two views of Brahma and the world alike—the former viewed as both qualified and unqualified, and the latter, sometimes as sat (real) and sometimes as asat (unreal),

(4) assertion of the realization of Brahma or Self as the highest goal of human life,

(5) recognition of jnana or knowledge as the only direct means of liberation, which is held to be eternal and, as such, the same as Brahma,

(6) inapplicability of all categories of knowledge to knowledge or consciousness itself which is none other the real self of every individual,

(7) and the recognition of the doctrine of karma, along with a great emphasis on moral and spiritual discipline.

The fact that the sages of the Upanishads believed in a single ultimate reality is not only indirectly indicated by the nature of their persistent queries, but is also adequately proved both directly and indirectly. Its indirect proof, we may say, consists in the sages' explicit denial and denouncement of duality and in their exuberant praises of the vision of one Brahma, while their unambiguous assertions about there being only one ultimate Reality may be said to constitute a direct proof thereof. Let us first take up some of these queries which besides pointing to the sages' implicit faith in one ultimate reality also give us some idea about the general spirit of the Upanishadic texts.

In the very beginning of the Shvetashvatara Upanishad we come across a number of sages assembled at one place and discussing among themselves the questions: 'What is the nature of Brahma, the cause (of the entire universe) ?, (or what is the cause of this world) ? (Is it Brahma ?), Whence are we born ? Who (or what) makes us live ? Where are we grounded ? And by whom being impelled or overruled in pleasures and pains do we follow the course of this world ?' These questions are obviously, as Shankara has concluded in his commentary on the verse under consideration, about the ultimate cause of the origin, subsistence and order of this universe, and the singular forms of the words 'kim', 'Karanam' and 'kena' occurring there do not fail to indicate the sages' implicit faith in one ultimate cause of all,

Five learned householders, it is said in the Chhandogya Upanishad, enter into a discussion and then, led by Uddalaka, approach Ashvapati in order to seek from him a satisfactory solution of the problems that are uppermost in their minds, viz., 'Who is our Atman? What is Brahma?' (Chh. Up. V. 11. 1). Ushasta, so it is maintained in the Brihadaranyaka Up., goes to Yajnavalkya and requests him in the words 'Explain to me him, who is the Brahma, present and not beyond our ken, him who is the soul (Atamn) in all things' (Br. Up. III. 4. 1 Hume's Trans.). Both these enquiries clearly point out that the knowledge of Brahma was valued, by the sages concerned, more than any other knowledge and that Brahma was by them already believed to be the inner self of all things.

Again, we are told in the Chhandogya Upanishad that when Shvetaketu, having sat long at the feet of his teacher and thinking himself to be a very learned person, returns home to his father, Aruni, the latter, seeing his son's self-conceit, enquires of him if he has known that by knowing which 'the unheard becomes heard of, the unthought, thought of, and the unknown, known' (Chh. VI. 1. 3). This, again, shows that the sage, Aruni, the father of Shvetaketu, was of belief that reality is ultimately one from which has emanated everything known or unknown; and this belief of his was, as a matter of fact, later on explicitly stated by him when his son's self-conceit disappeared and he humbly expressed his ignorance about the object of the enquiry made from him.

The fact that the belief in a single world-ground and origin of all things was not peculiar to Aruni only, but was a commonly entertained belief of the Upanishadic sages, is strongly suggested by other enquiries which are exactly similar to that of Aruni of Chhandogya Upanishad. Shaunaka, so says the Mundaka Upanishad, approaches Angirasa and solicits his pleasure to instruct him about that by knowing which everything else becomes known. He says : 'Through understanding of what, pray, does all this world become understood, Sir?' (Mund. Up. I. 1. 3-Hume's Trans.). Bhrigu, it is stated in the Taittiriya Upanishad, approached his father, Varuna, and requested him : 'Teach me, Sir, Brahma' (Tait. Up. III. 1): 'Who is this one or who is this one Self ?' is the enquiry made in the very beginning of the third adhyaya of Aitareya Upanishad. Narada, who inspite of his being very well versed in so many arts and sciences, as he himself expressed, felt unhappy, went to Sanat-Kumara who was considered to be, in those days, in possession of the true knowledge of the one self, and requested him to impart to him the knowledge of his true self so that he might also go beyond sorrow (Chh. Up. VII. 1. 3). It was again the desire to know Atman, the self, which made Indra and Virochana stay patiently for so many long years, leading a well-disciplined

life of perfect celibacy, at Prajapati's place. And when the latter asked them as to why they had been staying at his door they said: "The Self (Atman) which is free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, whose desire is the Real, whose conception is the Real—He should be searched out, Him one should desire to understand. He obtains all worlds and all desires who has found out and who understands that self—such do people declare to be your words, Sir, we have been living desiring Him" (Chh. Up. VIII. 7. 3—Hume's Trans.). The query that Nachiketa makes from Yamaraja and which he prizes more than all the treasures and pleasures offered to him by the latter, apparently, no doubt, seems to be an eschatological query; but the reply that Yamaraja gave to him adequately indicates that this query also really pertained to the nature of Atman, the universal Self. (Katha Up. I. 1. 20 and onwards).

The Kena Upanishad starts with the questions: 'Impelled by whom does the mind fall (on its objects) ? Urged by whom does the vital breath, the first (of all the sense-organs), go on running ? Urged by whom do people utter this speech ? What divinity yokes the sense-organs of vision and sound (to their objects) ?' All these questions point to an implicit belief in a single source of all powers.

The instances of such queries can, no doubt, be further multiplied. But we need not do so; for, a few ones that we have mentioned, we think, would suffice to serve our purpose of bringing home to the reader the fact of the persistent eagerness with which the sages of the Upanishads sought the ontological knowledge of this world and of their self alike. We may admit that 'transmigration, or metempsychosis' was to them, as Monsier Williams has pointed out, a 'great bugbear¹, as it has always been to almost all Indian theologians and thinkers, and that eschatological knowledge was also to them of much concern; but, as Prof. Ranade has said, "the desire of man to know the ultimate could not be finally quenched. He must know the answer to the most central problem—what is the Real, what is the Atman ?, and 'an attempt to solve this problem would lead the Upanishadic philosopher into the very heart of metaphysics.'² "Knowledge—not much learning, but the understanding of metaphysical truths", as it has been rightly observed by Prof. Hume, "was the impelling motive of the thinkers of Upanishads....., the one object of supreme value"³, and the truth of this observation seems to be

¹ C/6 Monsier Williams: *Brahmanism & Hinduism*, p. 41.

² Ranade : *A constructive Survey of the Up: Phil*, p. 64.

³ Hume : *Intro. to his Trans. of Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 58.

well borne out by the nature of the queries mentioned here, and will further be established by our brief but representative account of the vast contents of the scriptures concerned.

As we have already remarked the sages have explicitly denounced the viewing of ultimate reality as many. "That there is no plurality at all one should see with one's mind; (for) he who sees as if there were many here, goes from death to death" (Briha. Up. IV. 4. 19). The same assertion is almost literally reiterated twice in the Katha Upanishad (I. 4. 10-11). 'Fear accrues to him who makes the slightest difference' is a clear-cut pronouncement of the Taittiriya Upanishad (II. 7). That 'fear inevitably follows from duality or difference' is what has again been affirmed in the Brihadaranyaka (I. 4. 2). 'He who worships another god, thinking that he is different from him (lit. me), does not know; he is like an animal unto gods' (Br. Up. I. 4. 10). 'There is no happiness in the small or finite....., (and) the finite is that in which one sees another, hears another, (or) knows another.....,(and) what is finite is subject to destruction;.....'¹ is the denouncement of the vision of duality that a sage of the Chhandogya Upanishad has made in his own way. Again, in the self-same Upanishad it has been maintained that 'those who know differently from this (that I am all this, or that the Self (alone) is all that is here, there and everywhere) are under the subjection of another king; their worlds perish and in all the worlds their desires remain unfulfilled.'² 'He who leaves this world, O Gargi', says Yajnavalkya, 'without having known this indestructible One is as good as a slave (Kripaṇa)'.³ Those who do not realize the universal Self, the one immutable and all-pervading reality, as their own self and as being the ground and support of all changing things in this world and elsewhere (lit. who are killers of their Self), so says the Isha Upanishad, 'are doomed to go to extremely dark regions.'⁴ 'His is the most tremendous loss', it has been held in the Kena Upanishad, 'who departs from this world without having understood his true Self as the one innermost Self of all'.⁵

Thus, the vision of real duality or difference has been definitely disparaged in almost all the principal Upanishads, while, on the other hand, we find exuberant praises showered on the indubitable realization of Brahma, the one absolute Reality, as one's own Self. Immortality,⁶

1. Chh. Up. VII. 23. 1 and VII. 24. 1.

2 Ibid. VII, 25. 2.

3 Br. Up. III. 8. 10.

4 Isha Up. 3.

5 Kena Up. II. 5.

6 Kena Up. II. 5; Katha Up. I. 3. 15; Mund. Up. II. 2. 5; III. 2. 9; Ait. Up. 4. 6, 5. 4; Chh. Up. VII. 26. 2; Br. Up. IV. 4. 14; Shvet. VI. 15.

fearlessness¹ extinction of all doubts,² desires³ and karmas⁴ that keep one in bondage, removal of all grief⁵ and of all ill-will and hatred towards others⁶, and eternal realization of all desires⁷, or perfect bliss, are repeatedly uttered to be the happy results immediately consequent upon it.

Moreover, the Upanishads abound in such passages and verses as unambiguously and emphatically propound only one ultimate Reality, which is generally called by them Self, Sat or Brahma. For example, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says: 'All this was in the beginning the Self alone.....it did not see anything else other than itself.'⁸ 'All this that is there is this Self. All will forsake one who knows this all as different from the Self.'⁹ 'There is no second to it, nothing different or separate from it.'¹⁰ Verily all this is Brahma.¹¹ All this is Self.¹² 'O saumya, all this was in the beginning the Self alone, strictly one without a second.'¹³ In the beginning all this was one Self alone, there was nothing whatsoever other than it that winked or worked.¹⁴ The Brahma (or Self) is one from which all things are born, by which all are made, to live when born, and to which all return when destroyed.¹⁵ All these creations, O saumya, have the Sat for their origin, ground and subsistence.¹⁶ All this that is there in the world of the nature of becoming is through and through pervaded by its Lord¹⁷.....which, though the ground and support of all that moves, is perfectly immutable. When all things are known as this one Self only, all infatuation and grief of a person comes to an eternal end.¹⁸ Just "As Agni (Fire), which is one, entering this world becomes varied in form according to the respective forms (of the objects it burns), so also the one inner self of all beings becomes varied in form according to the respective forms (of beings it inhabits) and also (exists) outside."¹⁹ All this is established in the higher self.²⁰ Just as from a well-lit fire

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| 1 Tait. Up. II. 4; Br. Up. IV. 4. 25; IV. 2. 4. | 2 Mund., II. 2. 8. |
| 3 Br. Up. I. 3. 21. | 4 Mund. II. 2. 8. |
| 5 Isha, Up., 7; Katha I. 2. 12, 21; II. 4. 4; Mund. III. 2. 9; Chh. Up. VII. 1. 3; Br. Up. IV. 3. 22; Shvet. Up. III. 20. | |
| 6 Isha, Up., 6; Katha Up. II. 4. 5. | |
| 7 Katha Up. II. 5. 12-13; Tait. Up. V. 1; II. 7; II. 9; Ait. Up. 5. 4; Chh. Up. VII. 25. 2; VIII. 7. 1; VIII. 15.1; Shvet. Up. VI. 12. | |
| 8 (Br. Up. I. 4. 1). | 9 Ibid. II. 4. 6. |
| 10 Ibid. IV. 3. 30. | |
| 11 Chh. Up. III. 14. 1. | 12 Ibid. VI. 8. 7. |
| 13 Ibid. VI. 2. 1. | |
| 14 Ait. Up. I. 1. | 15 Tait. Up. II. 1. |
| 16 Chh. Up. VI. 8. 4. | |
| 17 Isha. Up. 1. | 18 Isha Up. 4-7. |
| 19 Katha Up. V. 9 (Eng. Trans. by T. M. P. Manadevan). | |
| 20 Pr. Up. IV. 7. | |

come out thousands of sparks of similar nature, similarly, O saumya, come out the manifold varied things from the Indestructible One in which they also get dissolved.¹ "He in whom the heavens, the earth and the interspace are woven, and also the mind along with all the vital breaths—him alone know as the one Self. Leave off other utterances. This is the bridge to immortality."² "Brahman is verily this immortal. In front is Brahman, behind is Brahman; Brahman is to the right and to the left. It spreads both above and below. Brahman is indeed this universe. It is the greatest."³

The Upanishadic assertions about there being one ultimate reality of all can be immensely further multiplied, but it does not seem to be necessary so to do. Whatever little has been already said with regard to it, is, I think, quite sufficient to establish our point. So we close this Upanishadic view of one reality with an extract from the Mandukya Upanishad which is regarded by orthodox Vedantins even these days as an equivalent of Brahmapada and is believed, as held in Mukta-kopani-shad, to contain the gist of all the one hundred and eight Upanishads.⁴ It says in the very beginning of it: 'All this is the syllable Om..... ...whatever there has been, is, or will be, is this Om alone. And whatever else there is that transcends the three-fold time that also is this Om itself. Undoubtedly all this is Brahma.'

In saying that Brahma is the only reality and the universal Self of all it, indeed, gets said that ultimately every self is essentially the same as Brahma. But the sages of the Upanishads are not satisfied with saying that alone. Their immediate and vivid realization of their identity with Brahma, the absolute Reality, fills their minds and hearts with so much joy that it overflows them and comes out in the form of their overt assertions, such as 'I am Brahma'⁵, 'this self is Brahma'⁶, 'I myself am all this'⁷, 'that which is this self is the immortal, the Brahma, the all'.⁸ And Uddalaka, a seer of the Chhandogya Upanishad, expresses the same truth to his son Shvetaketu by saying: 'All this has for its self that which is this subtle (origin of the world); that is real, that is the Self, (and) 'O', Shvetaketu, that thou art'⁹. He is so sure of it and also so anxious to

1 Mund. Up. II. 1. 2 Ibid. II. 5 (Eng. Trans. by T. M. P. Mahadevan).

3 Mund. Up. II. 11 (Eng. Trans. by T. M. P. Mahadevan).

4 Vide—Vedantika, p. 4 (An article on 'Shankara's views about Ishvara, Jiva and Sansara' by Shri Bharati Krishna Tirtha of Govardhana-Pitha).

5 Br. Up. I. 4. 10.

6 Mand. Up. 2, Br. Up. II. 5.19.

7 Chhand. Up. VII. 25.1.

8 Br. Up. II. 5.1.

9 Chh. Up. VI. 8.7.

bring it home to his son that the same truth has been repeatedly expressed nine times during their conversation at one time: Brahma, so it is said in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, forsakes him who knows Brahma as different from his self.¹ When Ushasta Chakrayana requested Yajnavalkya to instruct him about Brahma, the universal Self, the latter told him 'this thy Self is the Self that is within all'². In the Taittiriya Upanishad the same truth is put in different words when it is maintained that 'He who is this in an individual person and that which is in the sun is one and the same'³. The knower of Brahma, it is said in the Mundaka Up., becomes Brahma itself.⁴ 'As pure water poured into pure (water) becomes exactly the same, in the same manner, O Gautama, the self of a seer who has realized (Brahma) becomes (Brahma itself)'⁵. Having realized that by which one perceives the contents of both a dream and a waking state as the great and all-pervading Self, the wise does no longer grieve⁶.

Thus, on the point of each individual self's ultimate identity with Brahma, the absolute Reality, the Upanishads are very clear. There is no passage or verse therein which affirms their ultimate difference. Nevertheless, there is no dearth of such commentators thereon as do read difference between them. No doubt, the individual self or soul as such should be viewed as different from the omniscient and omnipotent Lord of all who has been held as an object of worship for him, as Shankara has himself admitted in his commentary on Brahma-Sutra (II, 1.22—'Adhikam tu bhedanirdeshat); but that difference cannot be said to be ultimately real. For, if it is taken as such, so many emphatic and clear-cut assertions of the Upanishads, of which a few only have been mentioned here, would get contradicted and would, consequently, need to be deleted from them. But that is not the way to understand a text, scriptural or otherwise. So the only right course open to us is to view the difference between the individual soul and Brahma as empirical or apparent only, and their identity as ultimate or ontological. The reverse of it cannot be said to be true; for the identity of the two is not, empirically known by us. And in case it were so known, there would be no meaning in its realization which, as we have seen in connection with the topic of Upanishadic enquiries and will further shortly see while considering the highest goal or ideal of human life according to these scriptural texts, is

1 Br. Up. II. 4.6; IV. 5.7.

2 Ibid. III. 4.1.

3 Tait. Up. III. 10.4; see also Isha Up. 16 and Chh.Up. IV. 11.1.

4 Mund. Up. III. 2.9.

5 Katha Up. 4.15.

6 Ibid. 4.4.

to be assiduously and persistently sought. Hence, the difference between an individual soul and the universal Self of all, namely Brahma, has got to be taken as empirical only, and all such texts as speak of it are to be accordingly interpreted. And this recognition of their difference, as it has been pointed out by Badarayana in his reply to the objection raised in Sutra 21, of pada 1, adhyaya II of his Brahma-Sutras and by Shankara in his commentary on the next sutra, sets aside the charge of an individual soul's not doing what is beneficial to it either in respect of creating this world-bondage for it or in respect of retaining itself in it after it has been created. For neither the Upanishads nor the Brahma-Sutras of Badarayana have recognized the individual soul as such as the creator of the universe. It is, no doubt, true that Brahma according to them is both the material and efficient cause of the world and that an individual soul is in its essence identical with it; but that does not mean that they hold an individual soul as such to be identical with Brahma as creator. It is only in respect of their ultimate or essential nature that their identity has been or can be maintained. And this brings us to two different views of Brahma itself—Brahma viewed as creator, and Brahma as it is in itself.

As a matter of fact, there are in the Upanishads three types of assertions about Brahma. It is sometimes described as a qualified and determinate Brahma, immanent in all things, and as creator and cause of all that is experienced or is capable of being experienced by us. But, on the other hand, there are such texts as well, as negate all qualifications and determinations of it, and describe it only as indescribable, whereas in some passages and Shrutis Brahma is, at one and the same time, spoken of as both transcendent and immanent, pure being and becoming, indeterminate and determinate, and so on. It is, however, not within our scope here to make mention of all such relevant texts. All the same it seems to be desirable to take up at least a few ones of each type so that there may not crop up in our mind any doubt with regard to this important fact.

Let us first take up such texts as hold Brahma to be indescribable. To begin with the Mandukya Upanishad, we find that the true self, which is held there to be the same as Brahma itself, is said to be 'unseen, incapable of being dealt with and grasped (lit. caught), without any mark, inconceivable, unnamable, devoid of all phenomena, perfectly quiet, benign or blissful, without a second, neither internally cognizant nor externally cognizant, nor, both internally and externally cognizant, nor a mass of cognizance, neither cognizing nor non-cognizing, (but) the essence of the knowledge of one's self only'.¹ Similarly, in the Mundaka Upanishad

¹ Mand. Up. 7.

Brahma is held to be 'invisible, ungraspable, classless, colourless, without the sense-organs of vision and audition, without hands and legs, eternal, too subtle and imperishable'¹; and the knowledge of this Brahma is called Brahma-vidya or para-vidya (highest knowledge) which is viewed as the ground of all possible knowledge². This Brahma is further spoken of as Sat (real)³, as partless and stainless, and as the light of all luminaries,⁴ where neither the sun nor the moon, nor any star or lightning sheds its light⁵. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad the same indescribable Brahma is described as 'not-gross, not-subtle; not-small, not-large; not-red, not-viscid; without shadow, (and) devoid of darkness; without air, without ether; unrelated; without taste, without smell; without eyes and ears; without speech, without mind; without vital fire, without vital breath; without mouth, without measure; devoid of internality, devoid of externality, one that eats nothing, (and) one which is eaten by nobody whatsoever.'⁶ This Brahma is 'neither this nor that'; but 'the real of the real'⁸. Nothing is prior to it, nothing is posterior to it, (and) nothing is interior or exterior to it.⁹ It is beyond speech, it is beyond touch,¹⁰ It is beyond (both) good and evil, beyond both effect and cause (lit. non-effect), and different from past and future (both)¹¹. Neither sat nor asat, it is benign (shiva) only.¹² It is that Bhuma (absolute) where a second is neither seen, nor heard nor known.¹³ It is absolutely one without a second.¹⁴ It has no room for any plurality or difference whatsoever.¹⁵ It has got to be seen as homogeneous only.¹⁶ In fact, it is one from which all speech along with mind returns, having not obtained it.¹⁷ Know that alone to be Brahma which manifests speech but is never manifested by it, which knows mind but is never known by mind. Whatever is manifested or known (lit. worshipped) is not Brahma.¹⁸ In short, the higher, pure or 'nirguna' Brahma is that one which beggars all description. It is beyond all forms of sensibility, and inaccessible to all categories of understanding. Pure being, pure consciousness and pure bliss are the only characters which have been positively held as constituting the essential nature of this nirguna Brahma.¹⁹ They are, however, not to be viewed as its attributes. Bliss and consciousness are not possessed by 'being' a different from them; but they themselves, as one, are it.

1 Mund. Up. I. 1.6.

2 Ibid. I. 1.5, 1.

3 Ibid. I. 2.1; II. 1.1.

4 Ibid. II. 2.9.

5 Ibid. II. 2.10.

6 Br. Up. III. 8.8.

7 Ibid. II. 3.6; III. 9.26; IV. 2.4; IV. 4.22; IV. 5.15.

8 Ibid. 9 Ibid. II. 5.19.

10 Katha Up. I. 3.15.

11 Katha Up. I. 2.14.

12 Shvet. Up. IV. 18.

13 Chh. Up. VII. 24.1.

14 Ibid. VI. 2.1.

15 Br. Up. IV. 4.19.

16 Ibid. IV. 4.20.

17 Tait. Up. II. 4.

18 Kena Up. I. 4.5.

19 Br. Up. III. 9.28; Tait. Up. II. 1; II. 7; II. 9; Mund. Up. II. 1.1; II. 2.7.

Now, coming to saguna (qualified) Brahma or Ishvara we may say that all those scriptural texts which speak of Brahma as creator and cause¹, as immanent² in all that exists, existed or will exist, as omniscient and omnipotent Lord of all³, and as an object of worship⁴, etc., pertain to Him. It is this qualified Brahma in whom the world-tree has been said to be rooted⁵, and of whom the earth and the ether, etc., have been viewed as constituting the body⁶. He is the inner controller of all⁷, and the dispenser of the fruits of all our actions. He is the wielder of infinite powers, including the world-creating power called Maya⁸; and it is by dint of His mere wish or thought that this world, which baffles all our attempts to understand it, gets created.⁹ All the Upanishads, as Badarayana has clearly maintained in his Brahmasutras¹⁰ and as Shankara has emphatically asserted in his commentary thereon¹¹, have decidedly propounded an intelligent being as the cause of all that is created. And this intelligent 'being' is their Saguna or qualified Brahma. There is really no room for Sankhya dualism in them. In Prof. Radhakrishnan's words, "The Sankhya dualism is repugnant to the Upanishads,"¹²

Then, there are also such passages or verses in these very Upanishads as describe Brahma as immanent and transcendent both¹³ and ascribe quite opposite characters to it¹⁴. For instance, it is said, in one breath, in the Isha Upanishad that it is unmoving and moving both¹⁵. But it is apparently a contradiction in terms; and contradiction in terms is one of the greatest violations of logical thinking. In fact, all the Upanishadic assertions about Nirguna and Saguna Brahma, if they be put side by side, can be said to be so many instances of such a violation. Of course, the charge of violating the principle of contradiction could easily be set aside if there were two really different Brahman, one nirguna and the other saguna. But, as we have seen, the Upanishads definitely propound only one ultimate Reality, which they call Brahma or Self, or by other such names. It

1 Chh. Up. VI. 2.2; Br. Up. II. 1.20; I. 5.23; I. 4.17; Mund. Up. II. 1.1; I. 1.9; Mand. Up. VI. ; Tait. Up. II. 1; III. 1; Katha, Up. IV. 9.

2 Br. Up. III. 4.1; II. 5.18; Mand. Up. I. Isha, I; Chh. Up. III. 14.1; Mund. Up. II. 2.5.

3 Isha. Up. 1; Shvet. 4.7; 5.10.

4 Chh. Up. III. 14.1, Ait. Up. V. 1.3.

5 See Katha. Up. II. 6.1.

6 Vide Br. Up. III. 7, 3-14.

7 Ibid. III. 8.9; Isha. Up. I, Mand. Up. 6.

8 Shvet. Up. 4.1; 4.9; 6.8. Br. Up. II. 5.19.

9 Ait. Up. 1.1.

10 BS. I. i. 2-4.

11 SBS. I. 1.10 and I. 1.12.

12 The Phil. of Up., p. 58.

13 Chh. Up. III. 12.6; Shvet. Up. III. 14.

14 Br. Up. II. 3.1.

15 Isha. Up., 4.5.

is, therefore, a genuine problem to explain the contradiction involved in the Upanishadic descriptions of nirguna and saguna Brahma. One way of resolving this contradiction, of course, could have been to attribute it to a change in the views of the sages and seers of these scriptures. But the plausibility of such an explanation is ruled out by the occurrence of these contradictory concepts not only in one and the same Upanishad but also, sometimes, in one and the same extract or verse thereof.

It really seems to be futile to trace a historical development in the views contained in these scriptures. For there is no orderly sequence at all in the expression of these views. Neither it can be maintained that the less advanced views come before the more advanced views, nor that they appear in the reverse order. Nor can we say that the later Upanishads contain more advanced views than those of the earlier ones, for even the earliest ones also contain them in their finalized forms. Hence, the only alternatives before us are either to maintain that the Upanishads are full of contradictions, or to pronounce their apparently contradictory assertions as statements made from two different points of view. The first alternative, however, is not an appropriate one. It does not, in fact, resolve the contradictions; it simply retains them. And to retain them is to think too disparagingly about the intellect and insight of the so well-recognized ancient pioneers of thought of India, nay of the whole world. Even a man of ordinary common sense, we are sure, will think twice before making two glaringly contradictory statements. How could, then, the persons of so penetrating an insight as the sages and seers of the Upanishads were, be guilty of such a serious breach of consistent thinking ? So, the only alternative with which we are left is to view the contradictory concepts of 'Nirguna' and 'Saguna' Brahma from two different standpoints, and it is, as we shall see, what Shankara has actually done. From the ultimate or its own point of view the absolute Reality or Brahma may rightly be viewed as 'nirguna' or unqualified. For, a thing is said to be qualified when it possesses such attributes as distinguish it from other similar or dissimilar things; but there is nothing similar or dissimilar to Brahma, the absolute Reality. But if we view the same 'Reality' from our own finite point of view to which there appears to exist a manifold world of causes and effects, it has got to be viewed as a qualified one. For the many that we see have got somehow to be accounted for, and what else if not the absolute Reality itself can be conceived ultimately to account for them ? But if so conceived, it is viewed as qualified. This point will further engage our attention when we come to Shankara's own distinction between nirguna Brahma and Brahma conceived as saguna or qualified.

We, therefore, leave it here and attend to the Upanishadic assertions about the world which also point to this distinction between the ultimate and empirical points of view.

The common Sanskrita words for world are 'sansara' and 'jagat' which mean something that moves or changes. Thus, the very etymological meanings of these words indicate that in India the world has, since an unknown antiquity, been viewed as a world of changing or becoming nature. In the very first 'mantra' (verse) of the Isha Upanishad all the objective contents of this world have been characterized as 'Jagat', i. e., as being subject to change. And what is subject to change must perish, must necessarily die out. So, it has been maintained in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad that 'all this (i. e., the world before us) is permeated by death, all is under the subjection of death',¹ and 'all this is the food or fodder of death.'² All possessions, power and pelf, so it was rightly observed by Nachiketa of Katha Upanishad, last till to-morrow only.³ In fact all effects, it seems to be a most definite (and also correct) view of all the Upanishads, are non-eternal. The Chhandogya Upanishad, therefore, speaks of them as mere names and forms which originate from speech only, and so are not real.⁴ The distinction between the non-eternal and the eternal, the mortal and the immortal, the many and the one, the effect and the non-effect, is indeed one of those facts that seem to have been most vividly visualized by the Upanishadic sages.⁵ The truly real or existent (sat) is also the immortal to them.⁶ All that which is finite is mortal; that (alone) which is infinite or absolute is immortal.⁷ Whatever is created or won through action is subject to destruction and death.⁸ The self that is Brahma is immortal.⁹ What is different from it is decaying and dying, and therefore unreal (anrita).¹⁰ All such assertions indicate that the seers of the Upanishads did not view the world and its contents as real. If Brahma, the one, the immortal, the uncaused, is alone truly real,¹¹ it is, infact, implied that the many, the mortal and the effect must be, in that sense, unreal.

1 Br. Up. III. 1. 3.

2 Ibid. III. 2. 10.

3 Katha Up. I. 1. 26.

4 Vide Chh. Up. VI. 1. 4-6.

5 Vide Katha Up. I. 2. 10; II. 6. 14; II. 5. 13 and Mund. Up. 1. 2. 12;

Br. Up. II. 3. 1.

6 Chh. Up. VIII. 3. 5.

7 Ibid. VII. 24. 1.

8 Ibid. VIII. 1. 6.

9 Br. Up. II. 5. 1-14.

10 Ibid. III. 5. 1; III. 7. 23 and Ch. Up. VIII. 3. 2.

11 Br. Up. V. 4. 1 (सत्यं ब्रह्म)

It is, no doubt, true that the world is also sometimes spoken of as satya or real,¹ and the Self or Brahma as the Real of the real (satyasya satya).² But then we are necessarily called upon to distinguish between the two senses in which the word 'satya' (real) is used in these texts. In view of what has been pointed out here with regard to the distinction between the world and Brahma, certainly it cannot be held that the former has been said to be real in the same sense in which the latter is. Had the perceptible world been truly real to the sages, they would not have spoken of the Real as being hidden behind it,³ and there would have been also no sense in their seeking it. This also, therefore, adequately indicates that the sages of the Upanishads viewed the world also from two different points of view, as they did the Brahma itself. For, it is from two different points of view only that the world may be said to be real and unreal both. If it is the one, immortal and eternal Brahma of the nature of pure being, bliss and consciousness which alone is real, the manifold objective and impure world which is of the nature of becoming has necessarily got to be deemed as unreal. If it is called real, it is only by courtesy, and can be said to be so only from the empirical or practical point of view. So, the distinction that Shankara later on made between the Paramarthika (ultimate or ontological) and the vyavaharika stand-points can be very well said to have been really based upon the Upanishadic view of one and the same Brahma as nirguna and saguna and of one and the same world of manifold names and forms as sat and asat both. The Upanishads have, as we have seen, definitely denounced the pluralistic vision of the world, and have explicitly held those persons who have it to be residing in ignorance (avidya).⁴

That the dearest and the most common object of the Upanishadic sages' enquiry was the Self, Sat, or Brahma, and not the world, we have already seen. It may, however, be further added here that their enquiries centred round the Self or Brahma because the realization of Brahma or Self was in those days deemed to be the highest goal, the highest knowledge and the Summum-Bonum, of human life. The knower of self was believed to realize all his desires,⁵ to go beyond all grief,⁶ and to obtain the highest.⁷ There is nothing higher than the Purusha, says the Katha

1 Ibid. I. 6. 3 (ब्रह्मरूपे सत्यं) & V. 14. 4 (ब्रह्मैव सत्यं)

2 Ibid. II. 3. 6 and II. 1. 20.]

3 Isha Up. 14; Br. Up. V. 15. 1.

4 Katha Up. I. 2. 5; Ait. Up. II. 6; Katha Up. I. 2. 16.

5 Mand. Up. 9, Ait. Up. II. 6, Katha Up. I. 2. 16.

6 Chh. Up. VII. 1. 3.

7 Tait. Up. II. 1.

Upanishd, that is the goal, that is the ultimate destination.¹ One should worship the Self, so says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, as his (true) world.² It is the only object 'worthy of being seen, heard, thought of and meditated; by seeing, hearing, thinking and knowing the Self all that is there becomes known.'³

But this realization or knowing of Brahma should not be mistaken for an objective knowledge of it. Against such a misconception the Upanishads have repeatedly warned us. Our self cannot become an object of perception simply because our sense-organs with the help of which we perceive objects are naturally so constituted that they can respond only to external stimuli and are not capable of perceiving what is internal to them.⁴ The eye, for instance, cannot see itself, nothing to say of seeing its self, the eye of the eye.⁵ Similarly our mind and intellect also cannot cope with the task of knowing the self, and that also for the same reason. The mind or intellect can be focussed only on something objective to it, whether it be something external to it or merely an idea of its own creation. The subject of knowledge which knows it, or the self which illumines it, is, by its very nature, beyond its ken. The true Self or Brahma, according to the Upanishads, is of the nature of consciousness, and consciousness is a necessary condition of all actual or possible objective knowledge. It cannot, therefore, itself be objectified. It is hence said to be imperceptible, indefinable, inconceivable and indescribable or unmanifestable.⁶ It is something from which speech along with mind returns without obtaining it.⁷ It is the seer of sight, the hearer of hearing, the thinker of thought and the knower of knowledge; one should not, therefore, says Yajnavalkya, attempt to see, hear, think or know it.⁸ It is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the unknown knower; there is no seer, no hearer, no thinker, (and) no knower other than it.⁹ There is no lapse of the sight of the seer, for it is indestructible.¹⁰ 'If you think you have known Brahma, then you have not at all known it.'¹¹ It is unknown to the knowers, (and) known to the unknowners.¹²

Have then, the Upanishads propounded scepticism or agnosticism ? Not at all. Of course, they have definitely denied objective knowledge of

1 Katha Up. I. 3. 11.

3 Ibid, II. 4. 5.

5 Kena Up. I. 2 (चक्षुषश्चक्षुः)

7 Tait. Up. II. 4.

9 Ibid. III. 7. 23; III. 8. 11.

11 Kena Up. II. 1.

2 Br. Up. I. 4. 15.

4 Katha Up. II. 4. 1.

6 Mand. Up. 7.

8 Br. Up. III 4. 2.

10 Ibid. IV. 3. 23.

12 Ibid, II. 3.

the self or Brahma. But that is by no means tantamount to denying knowledge as such of it. Knowledge is a wider term than objective knowledge. Knowledge of the categories of understanding, as Kant rightly observed, is not objectively obtained; all the same it is as good and certain a knowledge as the knowledge of the objects obtained through the categories, such as causality, relation, quality, quantity, etc., is. So also the sages of the Upanishads had a firm faith in the knowledge of Brahma or Self, although they categorically denied its perceptual or discursive knowledge. There are numerous assertions in the Upanishads which bear unequivocal testimony to this faith of theirs. Some of them have already been referred to in other contexts. All the same it seems to be desirable to have a perusal of a few more here. For instance, the Kena Upanishad which has in one tone so emphatically denied the possibility of cognizing and understanding the Self or Brahma, says in another that 'it is known in every act of knowing, (and) one who understands it obtains immortality.'¹ According to the Katha Upanishad 'it is seen by the persons of penetrating insight with the help of their fine and pointed intellect.'² Those who know it become immortal.³ The Mundaka Upanishad also says that 'this subtle Self ought to be known with the help of one's mind',⁴ and that 'for the sake of knowing it one should respectfully approach a teacher who is well-versed in the Scriptures and whose mind is very well grounded in Brahma.'⁵ In the words of Yajnavalkya addressed to Gargi, 'he who departs from this world after having known this Indestructible is a (true) Brahmana.'⁶ In fact, knowledge of the Self in the Upanishads has been uniformly recognized as the only direct means of liberation.⁷ But it has got to be carefully borne in mind that it is not an objective knowledge, and also that the acquisition of this knowledge is not a smooth-sailing, but, in the words of the Katha Upanishad, 'a very difficult path to traverse, as difficult as it is to walk on the sharp edge of a razor.'⁸ This, however, does not amount to pessimism or discouragement. It is only an expression of a hard fact, and that with a view to make an aspirant beware of the obstructions and allurements that come in the way of Self-realization, so that he may girdle his loins and rise

1 Kena Up. II. 12.

2 Katha Up. I. 3. 12.

3 Ibid. II. 6. 1.

4 Mund. Up. III. 1. 9.

5 Ibid. I. 2. 12.

6 Br. Up. III. 8. 10.

7 Vide Shvet. Up. III. 8; VI. 15; VI. 20; Chh. Up. VI. 14. 2, VII. 1. 3; Mund. Up. III. 1. 8; Isha Up. 6; Pr. Up. IV. 10; Mand. Up. 9-12, Tait. Up. II. 1; Br. Up. IV. 4. 14; IV. 4. 21;

Kena Up. II. 4. 5, Katha Up. II. 4. 1

8 Katha Up. I. 3. 14.

equal to the task that he once decides so eagerly to undertake. The Katha Upanishad itself has admonished him 'to arise, awake and stop not till his goal of realizing his greatest good is finally reached,'¹

A strictly disciplined moral life is one of the most essential conditions of Self-realization. A person who has not altogether withdrawn himself from evil deeds, and has not attained perfect placidity of mind and unity of purpose, is not capable of effecting it through mere understanding or knowledge.² The stainless world of Brahma is theirs (only) in whom there is no deceitfulness, falsehood and fraud.³ Only truth and not falsehood, it is said in the Mundaka Upanishad, is (ultimately) crowned with success.⁴ The sages made a clear-cut distinction between the pleasant and the good,⁵ and always sought the latter, believing that it was altogether essential not only for a happy life here and here after, but also for the realization of their highest end, the Brahma. The doctrine of karmas was to them as true a law of morality⁶ as the principle of causation has been believed to be as a physical law in modern times.

A somewhat detailed consideration of this doctrine, according to which every person must inevitably reap the fruits of his own actions, has been taken up in chapter VII. It should, however, be pointed out here that in recognizing this doctrine and an end to be realized through one's own sincere efforts of ethico-spiritual and intellectual nature, the sages of the Upanishads, it is implied, also recognized the freedom of each individual person. For, an 'end' means an 'ought', and the law of karma entails one's responsibility for what one does; and an 'ought' without a 'can' is as meaningless as responsibility, without freedom.

Moreover, the doctrine of karma tacitly assumes a plurality of different persons, jivas or souls, each one of which is said to determine its own destiny. But this view of individual persons or selves as different from one another comes into direct conflict with the view of there being only one ultimate Self. And this conflict, like others that have been just mentioned, can be satisfactorily explained only by admitting that the Upanishads have spoken about the self also from two different points of view. From one and the same point of view the self cannot be said to be one and many both. The Mundaka Upanishad has, indeed, clearly spoken of two sorts of knowledge or points of view—the one higher

1 Katha Up. I. 3. 14.

2 Ibid. Up. I. 2. 23.

3 Pr. Up. I. 16.

4 Mund. Up. III. 1. 6.

5 Katha Up. I. 2. 2.

6 See Chh. Up. V, 10. 7-9; Br. Up. III. 2. 13; IV. 4. 5.

and the other lower. The higher knowledge, according to it, is the knowledge of the one, formless, partless, imperceptible and indescribable absolute Brahma or Self (alone), while the lower knowledge is said to be that which is contained in the four Vedas and in their accessory texts (meaning thereby the knowledge that implies and concerns the manifold world of different persons and things.¹) The recognition of this difference between the two forms of knowledge based on two different standpoints, viz., higher and lower or ultimate and empirical (Paramarthika and Vyavaharika), is as essential for the right understanding of the Upanishadic texts as it is, as we shall see, for a correct appreciation of Shankara's Brahmapada.

1 Mund, Up. I. 1, 4-6,

3

Brahma, the Absolute Reality

‘एकरूपेण ह्यवस्थितो योऽर्थः स परमार्थः’ (शंकर-ब्र. सू. भा. २.१.११)

‘ब्रह्मत्तमत्वाद्ब्रह्म’ (शंकर-तैत्ति. उप. भा. २.१)

‘सर्वस्यात्मत्वाच्च ब्रह्मास्तित्वप्रसिद्धिः’ (शंकर-ब्र. सू. भा. १.१.१)

‘सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्मेति ब्रह्मणो लक्षणार्थं वाक्यम्’
(शंकर-तैत्ति. उप. भा. २.१)

Chapter 3

BRAHMA : THE ABSOLUTE REALITY

I. The ordinary view of reality

As Prof. C. E. M. Joad has said, "the attitude of the ordinary man in the street to the universe is that of an uncompromising realist. He conceives of himself as existing in a world of objects which exist together with him, yet independently of him, and he regards his consciousness as a sort of search-light which illuminates this world of objects and enables him to ascertain their number and their nature."¹ To him 'things in fact are what they seem.'² "To the great majority of mankind", as says Prof. Max Muller, "what we call the phenomenal world is thoroughly real, they know nothing more real."³ In the world, whatever is an object of sense-perception is viewed as real, and its opposite, as unreal.⁴ It is from the common point of view, as Lokamanya Tilak has rightly observed⁵, that in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad the real has been described as 'that which is seen or perceived'⁶, and it is from this point of view that we find Shankara also speaking of what is visible or concrete in form⁷ and what is present before a person⁸ as real, and of their opposites as unreal.

But this ordinary view of reality is not tenable. If seeming to be there were the same as actually being there, we should not have been able to distinguish between an illusory perception and what we call a correct perception. If mere appearance were a criterion of reality, the water of a

1 Intro. to Modern Phil., p. 6.

2 Ibid.

3 TLVP., p. 126.

4 SB. Kena Up., VI. 12 (यद्धि करणगोचरं तदस्तीति विपरीतं चासदिति)

5 Gitarahasya, p. 217.

6 Br. Up. V. 14. 4 (चक्षुर्वै सत्यं)

7 SB. Prashna Up. II. 5 (सम्पूर्तमसदं पूर्तञ्च)

8 Ibid. II. 11 (सतो विद्यमानस्य); SBG. 11. 37 see also SB. Prashna Up. IV. 5.

mirage or the snake in a rope should not have been judged as something unreal. But even a layman has to question the reality of such appearances when on a subsequent observation of them they are found not to be there. Such cases of illusion and subsequent disillusionment are certainly not uncommon. All that glitters is not actually found to be gold. 'The mother of pearl sometimes appears as silver, and the single moon in some cases as two moons.'¹; but neither this silver nor the two moons are, even by the layman, believed to be real when the reality of the mother of pearl and of one moon is subsequently brought home to him. "Reflection", in the words of Prof. Joad, "shows that there is much in our experience which it seems difficult to conceive of as being out there in the world. Such phenomena as dreams, hallucinations, reveries, and the experience of seeing double which attends intoxication, suggest that it is not everything in our experience that comes from outside.....at any rate, the fact that we can perceive what is not there, that in short there is such a thing as error, means that the common-sense realism of the man in the street must, in certain respects at least, be abandoned."² As Shankara has maintained, 'a thing cannot be said to be real simply because it is perceived, for perception is common to both the real and unreal (things)'.³

Whatever else may characterize reality it cannot certainly be mere appearing or seeming to be there. What once or for some time seems to be there, but is afterwards known not to be there, not because it shifts to some other place but because it was not there even when it appeared, does not really deserve to be called real. The real must undoubtedly be there. What is not there cannot be real. But simply appearing to be there is not enough to make a thing real. In order to be real it must actually be there. Neither subsequent perception nor reflection should be able to show its unreality or non-existence. And this even the layman seems to be believing, although inconsistently with his overt view of reality (that things are what they seem), when he pronounces an illusory perception like the phenomenon of seeing a snake in the rope to be erroneous and the object so perceived to be unreal. It is true that he has no clear conception of reality, and that if he is asked 'what is real?', he would most probably say that the real is what is seen or perceived by us; but in point of fact he seems to believe that the real is something uncontradictable. He may or may not say it to us or to himself in so many

1 SBS. (Upodghata).

2 Intro. to Modern Phil., p. p. 6-7.

3 SB. Shveta. Up. 1 (Introduction)—(न तावत्प्रतिपक्षत्वेन सत्यत्वं वक्तुं शक्यते, प्रतिपक्षेः सत्यत्वमिध्यात्वयोः समानत्वात्)

words; but in the heart of his hearts he seems to be believing in some such criterion of reality. The very fact that he regards a dream or an illusory percept as unreal, on waking and having the correct perception respectively, goes to show that even according to him reality of an object consists in its existence without contradiction or sublation. And in formulating his definition of reality Shankara, it appears, availed himself of some such conception of it, implicitly present even in the mind of the common man. Let us see what he says about it.

II. Shankara's notion of reality

Very much like T. H. Green who said that 'whatever anything is really it is unalterably'¹, Shankara has defined the real as 'that about which our understanding does not vary'², or as 'that the ascertained nature of which does not undergo any change.'³ That object, says he, which essentially remains what it is, is truly real.⁴ The Sanskrit equivalent of the term 'real' is 'satya' which, as Lokamanya Tilaka has observed, etymologically means something enduring, something which is never non-existent or something uncontradicted in triple-time (past, present and future).⁵ Of course, taken in its broad sense the word 'sat' from which the term 'satya' has been derived is also applicable to good character and good behaviour, etc.⁶; but when it is taken in its ontological or metaphysical sense only, it is definitely used for something which is not subject to change or is unalterable in its essential nature. As the author of the Mahabharata has defined it the real or satya is 'that which is indestructible, eternal and immutable'.⁷ In fact, this conception of 'satya' or real seems to be permeating through the entire orthodox literature of India. The Yogavasishtha defines it as that which is eternal in the beginning as well as in the end⁸, and the Vishnupurana speaks of it as that which even in remote time does not obtain a different or changed name.⁹ When Shrimadbhagavadgita says that the non-existence of the real is never

1 Prolegomena to Ethics, p. 29.

2 SBG. II. 16 (यद्विषया बुद्धिर्न व्यभिचरति तत्सत्)

3 SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (सत्यमिति यद्रूपेणयन्निश्चितं तद्रूपं न व्यभिचरति.....)

4 SBS. II. 1. 11 (एकरूपेण ह्यवस्थितो योऽर्थः स परमार्थः)

5 Gitarahasya, p. 32.

6 BG. XVII. 26, 27.

7 Shantiparva, 162. 10 (सत्यं नामाऽव्ययं नित्यमविकारि.....)

8 Yogavasishtha, V. 5. 9 (आदावन्ते च यन्नित्यं तत्सत्यं); also

Shrimadbhagavata, 11. 24. 17-18

9 Vishnupurana, II. 13. 100 (यत्तु कालान्तरेणापि नान्यां संज्ञामुपैति.....)

present¹, and when it is maintained in Tulasidasa's Ramacharitamansa that everything unreal appears to be real on account of the underlying reality of Rama in it², of Rama who ever remains the same while everything else, including even Brahma and Shiva, varies³, the truly real is undoubtedly viewed as immutable and eternal. That such is the view of the real according to the Upanishads as well, we have already seen, and hence need not refer to them again.

Thus, the view that the real must be something of unalterable nature, something about which our judgements should admit of no modification or revision, is not peculiar to Shankara, but seems to be the most commonly held view of most of the orthodox scriptures of India. Such a view of reality is, indeed, suggested by the very distinction which people in general make between the illusory and the so-called real percepts themselves. As Prof. Green has put it, ".....the conviction....., that whatever anything is really it is unalterably, regulates equally our most primitive and our most developed judgements of reality—the every-day supposition of there being a multitude of separate things which remain the same in themselves while their appearances to us alter, and the scientific quest for uniformity or unalterableness in a law of universal change."⁴ Having raised the question 'How do we decide whether any particular event or object is really what it seems to be, or whether our belief about it is true?', Green has rightly observed that "the answer must be that we do so by testing the unalterableness of the qualities which we ascribe to it, or which form its apparent nature."⁵ Do we not pronounce the contents of a dream as unreal simply because they do not tally with our subsequent experiences of waking life? And is not an illusory percept judged to be illusory or unreal because there is discrepancy between it and the later percept which contradicts it? On the other hand, are not the so-called real objects of waking experience believed to be real because we think, rightly or wrongly, that they are what they seem to be and that they remain the same as they, at the time of their perception, appear to us, no matter whether we remain there or not to perceive them? Is not then unalterableness or non-contradiction really our criterion of testing the reality of things? We may or may not admit it; but in point of fact it seems to be so.

1 BG. II. 16 (नाभावो विद्यते सतः.....)

2 Balakanda, Shloka, 6.

3 Uttarakanda, 80-81 (Kha)

4 Prolegomena to Ethics, p. 29.

5 Ibid.

Now, if we stick to unalterableness and non-contradiction as being the true marks of the reality of a thing and honestly reflect upon and examine the true nature of things we perceive and judge to be real, we find that, strictly speaking, they also cannot be held to be truly real. For, none of them is really unalterable. Nothing to say of ordinary things, even iron-bridges and concrete-walls; nay, even lofty mountains and deep oceans, the sun and the moon, will all one day equally go out of existence. There was a time when they were not there, and there will again come a time when they will no longer be there. As the scientists tell us, they are all subject to perpetual change. There is nothing in the apparent world which is to-day just the same as it was yesterday. Erosion or evaporation, subtraction or substitution, addition or enhancement, and so on, characterize the very nature of things from the tiniest to the largest. Nothing finite is stationary, nothing finite is eternal. The self-existent and unrelated alone can conceivably be unalterable and eternal; but nothing in the world is self-existent and unrelated, and hence nothing unalterable and eternal. Shankara, therefore, as we shall see in detail in chapter V, regards the world and its constituents as unreal, and believes that Brahma, which is self-existent, unrelated, infinite and the innermost self and support of all, is the only true reality.

According to Shankara, all persons have always a twofold cognition in one and the same ground.¹ For example, when we experience 'the pot is', 'the cloth is', 'the elephant is', and so on, we have, he would say, on the one hand, the cognition of the pot, the cloth and the elephant; etc., and, on the other hand, the experience of existence. Of these two, while the former undergoes change from case to case, the latter unalterably remains there², so much so that even in illusory perceptions, like that of seeing water in a mirage, it continues to persist.³ There is in fact, no experience, subjective or objective, of any sort which is unaccompanied by the feeling or experience of 'is'. All changes, all names and forms, and all experiences there-of, whether correct or incorrect, imply it and are supported and sustained by it. This, the ultimate and all-pervading existence, is, therefore, according to Shankara, the only true and ultimate reality. It is unalterable because it is self-existent. What is alterable or subject to change cannot be self-existent, and what is self-

1 SBG. II. 16. (सर्वत्र द्वे बुद्धौ सर्वैः उपलभ्येते समानाधिकरणे)

2 SBG. II. 16. (सन्धटः सन् पटः.....नतु सद्बुद्धिः)

3 Ibid, II. 18. (मृगतृष्णिकादौ सद्बुद्धिः अनुवर्तमाना.....)

existent cannot change. A change in what is self-existent is inconceivable. "Of itself", as Prof. G. R. Malkani has rightly maintained, 'it will continue to remain what it is.'¹ And it will not change through outside influence, for what is open to outside influence cannot be self-existent. A self-existent thing cannot "enter into a relation with other things. It cannot be moved out of itself. If a thing enters a movement or a process of change it can in no sense stand outside this process.....It cannot be said to have a self-identical or self-existent being."² In order to be unalterable a thing must be self-existent, and in order to be self-existent it must be unalterable. The self-existent, in other words, must be of the nature of 'being', and not of the nature of becoming.

Becoming means changing or change. But change cannot exist by itself. Change without something to change, just as movement without something to move, or flowing without something to flow, is quite unintelligible. Bergson, no doubt, as we shall see in chapter XI, speaks of change as the only true reality; but such a conception of reality is not only against our common notion of it, but also something self-contradictory and meaningless. Change is self-contradictory in so far as it requires one and the same thing at one and the same time to be and not to be what it is. If it remains what it is, it does not change; and if it changes, it does not remain what it is. And if we say, as Bergson does, that there is nothing that changes but change alone, we do not understand what we say. With best of our efforts we fail to conceive change in and by itself. The idea of change not only forces on our mind the idea of something that changes, but also the idea of something else which makes it change. Change, as it is an effect, cannot, be something uncaused, as what is changeless can be. Since change always looks beyond itself to something that causes or explains it and to something which supports it, it cannot be self-existent. There is, however, nothing in the nature of 'being' which makes it incompatible with self-existence. In fact 'being' and 'self-existence' are one and the same thing. 'Being', unlike 'becoming', cannot be an effect. What is an effect cannot be of the nature of being. 'Being', in so far as it is not an effect, is self-identical, self-existent and self-explanatory. As a matter of fact it requires no explanation. To seek an explanation of 'being' is to think of it as something else. To be 'being' is to be unalterable, to be unalterable is to be self-existent, and to be self-existent

1 The Philosophical Quarterly (April, 1940) p. 50,

2 Ibid,

is to be self-identical and self-explanatory. Shankara's true Reality, therefore, is at once unalterable, self-existent, self-identical and self-explanatory being. And it is called *Brahma*.

(3) The meaning of the word *Brahman*

The word '*Brahman*' or '*Brahma*' is derived from the Sanskrita root '*Brih*' which means to grow, or let grow, or to be great. So according to Shankara, if we take into consideration and follow the derivation of of this term from its root meaning to be great, its connotation consisting of eternal purity, etc., gets at once conveyed to us.¹ The absolute or the infinite is called *Brahma* because of its greatness.² *Brahma* is so called because it is (fully) grown or because it makes other things grow.³ It is known as *Brahma* because it is most fully accomplished, or the greatest of all,⁴

In the opinion of Prof. Max Muller the word '*Brahman*' seems to have originally meant "what bursts forth or breaks forth whether in the shape of thought and word or in the shape of creative power or physical force."⁵ But he is more inclined to believe that 'word was really the prime-most, and in the earlier times the most common, meaning of the term *Brahman*. He has tried to show that this term is derived from the same root from which the Latin word '*Verbum*' and the English word 'word' have been derived. In order to justify this view Prof. Max Muller has maintained that a number of passages in the *Brahmanas* become more intelligible if the word '*Brahman*' used in them is translated as word. And the fact that *Brahaspati*, the priest of the gods, is also named *Vachaspati* has also lent him support to believe that the word '*Brahman*' originally meant speech or word as does the word '*Vak*' mean.⁶ In his own words "If *brih* meant originally to break or burst forth, *brahman* would have meant at first what breaks forth, an utterance, a word, and in this sense and in the sense of prayer *brahman* is of very frequent occurrence in the *Veda*. It might, however, at the same time have meant what bursts forth in the sense of creation or creator, particu-

1 SBS. I. 1. 1 (ब्रह्मशब्दस्य.....अनुगमात्)

2 SB. Kana Up. I. 5 (निरतिशयं भूमाख्यं बृहत्त्वाद्ब्रह्मेति विद्धि)

3 SB. Shveta. Up. I. 1.

4 SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (बृहत्तमत्वाद्ब्रह्म)

5 TLUP., p. 22.

6 Vide TLVP., p. p. 148-49.

larly when creation was conceived not as a making, but as a coming forth.....The root brih exists also as bridh or vridh, and then means to burst forth in the sense of growing. If then from vridh we formed a substantive vardha, this would in Latin regularly take the form of verbum. Latin has no dh, but represents dh by 'f' or 'b'...As sanskrit dh is represented in English by 'd', this vardha, this Latin Verbum would regularly be reproduced in English by word, that is brahman, verbum and word would all proceed from the same root vrih or vridh, to burst forth, and would share the same meaning, viz., word."¹

Various are, of course, the views of modern scholars like Prof. Deussen, Roth, Oldenberg, Haug, Hillebrandt, Radhakrishnan and others, about the etymological and chronological meanings of the word 'Brahman'. 'Force of will,' 'a sacred formula', 'prayer', 'truth', 'a magic spell', 'the sacred hymns', 'magical force', 'magical verses', 'the vedic ceremonies', 'the hotri-priest', the new', 'the world-producing energy', 'the absolute' 'the great', etc."², may all be taken to have been its senses at this or that time; but they do not have much significance for us; for, so far as its finalized meaning is concerned the scholars do not seem to differ among themselves. Call it the 'absolute', the 'great', the 'world-producing power or energy', the word 'Brahman' has finally been taken in the sense of the ultimate or absolute Reality which is the origin, ground and support of the evolution of the entire world. That this meaning of the word 'Brahman' had already been fixed even before the advent of the Upanishadic age seems to be almost certain. All Upanishadic enquiries and conversations pertaining to Brahma indicate it. And not only Shankara, but, so far as we know, other commentators on these sacred texts have also so interpreted it; and Badarayana, the author of the Brahma-sutras, is quite definite in his opinion that during the time of the Upanishads the word 'Brahman' was used in the sense of absolute Reality which was believed to be both the material and efficient cause of the entire world-process, and not in the sense of word, prayer, a magic spell, and the like. Anyway, so far as Shankara is concerned we can definitely say that to him Brahma is the 'great', the 'absolute', the 'self-existent' and the one ground and support of all that grows or is of the nature of becoming. It should, however, be borne in mind that he has used the word 'Brahma' in two somewhat different sense-ones primary and the other secondary. In the primary sense it has been used for the

1 TLVP., p. p. 149-50.

2 See Radhakrishnan; The Phil. of the Up., p.p. 39-40. and foot-notes; Dasgupta: AHIP. Vol. I, p.p. 36-37.

absolute ultimate Reality itself which is believed to be perfectly identical in its nature, unqualified and indefinable, while in the secondary sense it has also been applied to Ishvara or Brahma conceived as qualified, as well as to His power, on the ground that power is non-different from its wielder.¹ And this we shall see as we proceed further.

IV. The 'nirguna' (unqualified) and 'saguna' (qualified) Brahma

From our brief account of the Upanishadic contents given in the preceding chapter we have seen that the Upanishads have described Brahma both affirmatively and negatively. Affirmatively it has been described as being all and as the cause of the origin, etc., of the entire universe, and in similar other terms, while negatively it has been said to be 'neither this nor that', one without a second, untouched by time and space, and so on. The former type of assertions are, undoubtedly, about a qualified being or reality, while the latter ones speak of it, with equal certainty, as something unquestionably unqualified.

By reflecting about these Upanishadic assertions Shankara made a distinction between Brahma as it must be in itself and as it has got to be conceived by us in relation with the world of our experience. The former he calls nirguna, nirvishesha or para Brahma, and the latter, saguna, savishesha, or apara Brahma. The nirguna Brahma, according to him, is also called Sat² (being or existence), Paramartha-satya³ (ultimate reality), Paramartha-tattva⁴ (highest entity) and Bhuma⁵ (absolute, great or unexcelled), etc. It is eternally self-identical⁶, strictly one⁷, always of the same nature⁸, without parts⁹, and hence without change¹⁰, perfectly immutable in its essential nature¹¹, indestructible because of knowing no increase or decrease¹², imperceptible, inconceivable, ungraspable, devoid of all

1 SBG. XIV. 27.

2 Vide SBG. II. 17 (सदाख्येन ब्रह्मणा.....)

3 Vide SB. Tait. Up. II. 6 (परमार्थं सत्यं ब्रह्म)

4 SBG. II. 59 (परमार्थं तत्त्वं ब्रह्म)

5 SB. Chh. Up. VII. 23. 1 (भूमा महन्निरतिशयं)

SB. Kena Up. I. 5 (ब्रह्म निरतिशयं भूमाख्यं)

6 SBS. I. 3. 19 (कूटस्थ नित्य.....)

7 SB. Tait. Up. II. 6 (एकमेव हि); SB. Isha Up. 4; SB. Chh. Up. VI. 2. 1, 2.

8 SB. Isha Up. 4 (सर्ववैकरूपं)

9 SBS. IV. 3. 14; SB. Shvet. Up. VI. 19.

10 SBG. II. 30; II. 17.

11 SB. Isha Up. 4; SBG. II. 17.

12 SBG. II. 17.

qualities¹, without parts, untouched by action, perfectly quiet, pure and stainless², neither coarse nor fine, neither big nor small.³ Neither space nor time can be conceived in it; for, it is neither this nor that.⁴ It is great, unborn, undecaying or unaging, indestructible, immortal and free from all fear.⁵ It is different from vice and virtue both, and different from both cause and effect. The triple-time designated as past, present and future does not enter into its nature.⁶ It is not in time, nor time in it. So also neither space is in it, nor it, in space. It has neither inside nor outside⁷, no cause, no effect.⁸ In fact, none of the categories in terms of which we understand things is applicable to it. It is indefinable, because indeterminate.⁹ A definition must be per genus et differentiam. But Brahma has neither genus nor differentia.¹⁰ It is the highest Being, and there is nothing existing independently of it, from which it could be distinguished. Though beyond all time and space, etc., it permeates all.¹¹ Just as the great space (akasha) pervades the space within a jar, so also Brahma, called Sat, pervades the entire universe, including the space itself.¹² All the same, it is, in its essential nature, altogether unconditioned, and devoid of all qualities which characterize the world we live in.¹³ Parts or properties it has none.¹⁴ It is non-related (asanga and asansargi)¹⁵, and devoid of all adjuncts and differences.¹⁶

This, however, does not mean that it is nothing. To negate qualities of Brahma is not to negate its being or existence. In fact, all existence that appears to be there is said to be the existence of Brahma itself. It is eternally self-existent, and hence the only real entity. It is the ultimate

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- 1 Vide SB. Mund. Up. I. 1. 6. 2 SB. Shvet. Up. VI. 19.
 3 SB. Br. Up. III. 8. 8.
 4 SBS. IV. 3.14; see also SB. BR. Up. III. 9.26; IV. 4. 22; SB. Ait. Up. I. 1 (Intro.)
 5 Vide SB. Br. Up. IV. 4. 25. 6 SB. Katha Up. II. 14.
 7 SBS. III. 2. 16. 8 SB. Br. Up. II. 5. 19.
 9 SBS. IV. 3. 14; III. 2. 16; III. 2. 11 (समस्तविशेषरहित)
 10 Vide SB. Mand. Up. I. 7; SB. Kena Up. I. 3.
 11 Atmabodha, 68 (दिग्देशकालाद्यनपेक्षसर्वगं)
 12 SBG. II. 17. 13 Vide SB. Isha Up. 4; Tait. Up. II. 1; SBG. XII (Intro.)
 14 SB. Chh. Up. VI. 2. 2 (निरवयवं.....निष्कल.....)
 SBG. XII. (Intro.) (विष्वस्तसर्वविशेषणं.....)
 VIII. 11; SB. Ait. Up. 1. 1. 1 (सर्वसंसारधर्मवर्जितं)
 15 SB. Br. Up. III. 9. 26; SBG. IX. 4. 5.
 16 SBG. XIII. 2 (निरस्तसर्वोपाधिभेद.....)
 XII. 1 (निरस्तसर्वोपाधि.....)

source, ground and support of all appearances.¹ It is its existence that shines forth in all beings alike. It is the universal Self of all of us.² And our undeniable experience of our existence, Shankara has maintained, is the surest proof of its existence.³

As a matter of fact, possession of qualities does not seem to be indispensable for existence. Qualities themselves, for instance, may be said to be devoid of qualities, and yet their existence cannot be denied. If a quality were not intelligible in itself without the aid of a quality to qualify it, it would never be intelligible. For, on the assumption that nothing is intelligible unless it is qualified, a quality, in order to be understood, will need a further quality to qualify it, and so on ad infinitum. But this will make the intelligibility of a quality utterly impossible. If a quality as such is ever to be grasped, it will have to be conceded that it itself needs no quality to make it conceivable. The case of qualities themselves, therefore, may conveniently be cited to illustrate the existence of Brahma without qualities.

In addition to this, some advocates of unqualified Brahma have also tried to point out that the conception of Brahma as qualified is full of flagrant inconsistency. In their opinion, if it is maintained that Brahma has qualities, it has got to be stated whether those qualities are different or not different from it. In case the qualities are said to be different from Brahma, Brahma as such will have to be admitted as something devoid of them, i. e., as unqualified; and if the qualities are not different from but identical with it, then it would be wrong to say that Brahma has them or is qualified by them, since on being so conceived the qualities would go to constitute its very being, and, consequently, would not be its qualities. To hold that qualities are identical with Brahma is not, thus, consistent with holding them to be its qualities. If Brahma has them, they cannot be identical with it; and if they are identical with it, it cannot be said to have them. It is, therefore, held that there is nothing wrong in saying that Brahma is unqualified, because the assertion that Brahma has qualities is either found to be a wrong assertion or to be one which is tantamount to saying that Brahma is not, strictly speaking, possessed of qualities.

Truly speaking, to qualify an entity is to limit it. The limitless or infinite absolute Reality cannot, therefore, admit of being conceived as

1 SB. Chh. Up. VI. 8. 4.

2 SB. Ait. Up. II. 1 (परं ब्रह्म आत्मात्मनः सर्वभूतानां च.....)

3. 1 (सर्वस्यात्मत्वाच्च ब्रह्मास्तित्वप्रसिद्धिः)

qualified. Of course, the infinite cannot exclude the finite. For, in case it did so, it would itself be a finite. But as infinite it must negate all finites. No matter whether they are taken distributively or collectively, it must refuse to be understood in terms of them. So, if Shankara, following the Upanishads, has sought to describe the indescribable Brahma, the infinite, only negatively, or figuratively, he is quite faithful to its true nature. - Though Brahma as true and ultimate being is immanent in all that is experienced or can be conceived to exist¹, yet nothing which is an object of experience or conception can be predicated of it.² For, whatever this object be it will be something finite, which the Infinite will always transcend. Brahma is thus said to beggar all description. It can be described neither as this nor as that (*neti neti*). And as such it cannot be said even to be transcendent. For, to say so is also to make an attempt to think it in some way. Neither dual nor non-dual, neither *sat* nor *asat*, Brahma in itself is what it is.³ But it does not mean that we are to think and say nothing about it.

No doubt, our thinking about Brahma cannot prove equal to the task of realizing it as it is in itself, all the same it is not like sifting water in a sieve. It may not succeed in constructing the true nature of Brahma quite faithfully, nevertheless its efficiency in enabling us to have an approximate approach to it cannot be denied. "It is true", as Prof. A. C. Mukerji has rightly said, "that the Absolute is indescribable; but, in spite of this, it may be indirectly described by using the highest categories of thought when the latter are not taken in their individual meanings."⁴ In fact, Shankara has himself maintained that the discrimination of the real from the unreal is dependent upon (our) intellect (*buddhi*)⁵ and that intellect is our means of knowing the true nature of things.⁶ And accordingly, by exercising his intellect or thought, he has, as we have already seen, emphatically asserted that ultimate Reality or Brahma must be immutable or self-existent, i. e., of the nature of pure being or existence. So, existence or being, it may be maintained, is viewed by him as a positive character of Brahma. And this existence, it is said, must also be of the nature of pure consciousness. For, when we reflect and try to grasp immutable and pure existence, we come to get at it in our consciousness itself. The

1 SB, Chh. Up. VI. 2. 1 (*सर्वगतं*)

2 Ibid. (*निर्विशेषं*)

3 Praudhanubbuti, 11 (*द्वैताद्वैतविवर्जित*.....)

SBG. XIII. 12 (*न सत् तद् नासदुच्यते*)

4 The Nature of Self, p. 267, 5 SBG. II, 16,

6 SB, Katha Up. VI. 12,

objects of our experience, we find, are all effects, and, as such, come into existence and go out of it. None of them, we notice, is always present in our experience. Even our body, nothing to say of mental states, is definitely known to be subject to vital changes. Just as the objects of a dream-state are found to be absent when we wake up and open our eyes, so also are, the objects of waking-life in a dream-state, and both the types of objects are found to be equally missing when we are in the lap of sound sleep. But our consciousness is ever present.¹ Its absence is, and can be, never known. Even the knowledge of its absence will imply it. It is not an effect. For, it is never known as such. It is, in fact, the necessary postulate of all knowledge. Its priority to all knowledge, objective or subjective, is undeniable. And its permanence or immutable nature is well reflected in everybody's constant feeling of personal identity. In spite of all vital changes in our bodily and psychical self this feeling of self-identity is never affected. And its only satisfactory explanation lies in the acceptance of immutable consciousness as constituting our true nature. There are, of course, some persons who sometimes think that in the state of sound sleep there is no consciousness at all. But in so thinking they are not faithful to their own experience of this state. They mistake the absence of the objects of knowledge for the absence of consciousness itself. But in so doing they little realize that the absence of objects could have never been known if there were no consciousness of this absence. The very fact that on being awake after sound sleep we feel and remember that we enjoyed a sound sleep and had no knowledge of any object whatsoever, bears clear testimony to the existence of objectless consciousness during that state.

Thus, it is in our consciousness alone that, on reflection, we find the presence of immutable, pure and simple existence. Consciousness and existence are always experienced together. Our immediate experience of consciousness is the experience of it as existent or existence, as something that indubitably is; and along with the appearance of existence awareness or consciousness is also always present. Consciousness is permeated by existence and existence, in so far as it is known, by consciousness. We cannot affirm one and negate the other simultaneously: In maintaining one the other is also implicitly maintained. Similarly, it is also not possible to deny either of them exclusively. The denial of one implies the denial of the other. As a matter of fact, neither consciousness nor existence admits of being consistently denied. To deny consciousness

1 Compare Panchadashi, I. 3-7.

is to posit it; and to deny existence is not only to deny the constant content of all forms of universal experience, but also to deny consciousness or experience itself. But this is self-contradictory, and hence absurd: Moreover, the fact that what is absolutely non-existent, as a triangular circle or the son of a barren woman, never appears or reveals itself, and that existence, in some form or the other, always reveals itself, self-revelation, which constitutes the distinguishing character of consciousness, appears to be an essential feature of existence as well. Thus, pure existence and pure consciousness seem to be one and the same uncontradictable ontological entity.

But, then, pure bliss also seems to be a constant accompaniment of pure existence and pure consciousness. For, were existence not of the nature of bliss, no-body would have ever craved for it.¹ The very fact that every conscious being always desires to be and never not to be indicates that existence and consciousness are inseparably one with happiness or bliss.² So, Shankara has conceived pure existence, pure consciousness and pure bliss as constituting the very nature of Brahma, the Absolute Reality.³ And this characterization of Brahma clearly shows that, though said to be indeterminate, non-relational and indefinable, it is something very definite and concrete. Of course, it is nothing like any finite experience of ours, and that is what is meant by adding the word pure to consciousness, etc. How can, in fact, the infinite experience be anything like a finite one? To think of understanding the infinite in terms of the finite is to deny that it is infinite. One's failure to do so does not affect the nature of the infinite. It simply shows the futility of attempts at impossibilities. It should, however, be clearly borne in mind that consciousness, etc., are not, according to Shankara, the attributes of Brahma, but rather Brahma itself. They do not define Brahma. In fact, Brahma, the Absolute, the Infinite, cannot be defined.⁴

However, Brahma has also got to be conceived as being possessed of infinite power and infinite knowledge, and as being both the material and efficient cause of the entire universe. If Brahma is the absolute Reality, strictly one without a second, it is implied that the origin, etc., of the mani-

1 Vide SB. Tait. II. 7.

2 Panchadashi, I. 8.

3 Vide SB. Tait. Up. II. 1; II. 7-9; Chh. Up. VI. 2. 1-2; VII. 22-23; SB. Br. Up. III. 9. 28; SBS. I. 1. 12, 13; SB. Mand. Karika. III. 47; Atma-bodha 56, 64.

4 Vide SB. Tait. UP. II. 1.

fold world of our actual experience must ultimately be traced to it. For, to conceive anything other than it as being the ultimate material or efficient cause of the world-appearance would mean an open challenge to its oneness and absoluteness alike. So, Shankara has maintained that it is Brahma itself, conceived as endowed with the world-projecting inexplicable power called maya, that is both the material and efficient cause of the world. It is, then, designated by him as saguna (qualified) or apara (lower) Brahma, or Ishvara.¹

Ishvara, according to Shankara, is the Lord and moral governor of the entire universe. Unlike Para-Brahma, apara-Brahma or Ishvara is determinate and qualified. Shankara sometimes uses the word 'Brahma' for Ishvara as well; for the latter is none other than the former when conceived with the adjunct of maya, the world-projecting mysterious power. All the same these two forms have got to be distinguished. While Brahma in itself is of the nature of pure being and pure consciousness,² Ishvara as such is being-in-becoming, and the impartial spectator of all that there is, was, or will be in the phenomenal world. He is with his two prakritis or natures, viz., the individual souls and the causal energy of the world over which he rules.³ He is omniscient, omnipotent and the cause of the origin, subsistence, and dissolution of the entire world-process.⁴ He is eternally established, and his cognition or knowledge of the origin, subsistence and dissolution of the world is eternal.⁵ His knowledge is free from all obstructions and impediments. In order to know or act he does not require a sense-organ or body.⁶ His very nature is eternal knowledge, just as luminosity is the nature of the sun.⁷ If it be asked, 'what is the object of the Lord's knowledge prior to the origin of the world?', Shankara would reply that this knowledge pertains to the unevolved names and forms which are then willed by him to be evolved.⁸ That all-pervasion, eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, and the Selfhood of all, and other such qualities belong to Brahma (Ishvara) follows from his being the cause of the entire world.⁹ His omnipotence is implied by his being the cause of all effects.¹⁰ He is of infallible or real will (satya-sankalpa), possessing as he does the unimpeded power of

1 Vide SBS. IV. 3. 14, and I. 1. 2 (Intro.).

2 SB. Kena Up. I. 5. (चैतन्यमात्रसत्ताकम्)

3 SBG. XII. 19.

4 SBS. I. 1. 5 (Intro.); I. 1. 2.

5 SBS. I. 1. 5.

6 Ibid. & SB. Shvet. Up. III. 19.

7 SBS. I. 1. 5.

8 Ibid.

9 SBS. I. 2. 1.

10 Ibid. I. 2. 18.

creating, preserving and reabsorbing the entire world.¹ He is, thus, a personal God, while Brahma, the unqualified Being, can rightly be said to be impersonal or supra-personal. While the former necessarily requires the individual souls and the world to be ruled by him,² the latter is devoid of all names, forms and actions;³ it is beyond all creation and empirical facts (nishprapancha).⁴ The distinction of knowledge, knower and known, without which the conception of Ishvara is not possible, is absolutely absent in the case of Brahma, the ultimate Reality.⁵ Ishvara is the object of worship, while Brahma, the Absolute, is not so.⁶ The worshippers and devotees of Ishvara go to Him; but to speak of going to Brahma is untenable.⁷ Ishvara is the distributor of all the three-fold fruits—pleasant, unpleasant and mixed—to all beings according to their own merit and demerit.⁸ He witnesses all our actions and their fruits, but is not affected by them.⁹ All the same he is our inner controller and guide simply by virtue of his infinite knowledge.¹⁰ Ishvara has also been called by Shankara Narayana, Vishnu, Purushottama, etc., and it has been believed that out of compassion for his devotees, and in order to protect the gentle virtues from the onslaught of inordinately grown brutal forces of vice, he even incarnates himself in the form of this or that being on this earth.¹¹

The knowledge of 'para' Brahma is called para vidya, while that of 'apara' (lower) Brahma or Ishvara, apara vidya, or saguna-vidya.¹² The latter includes the knowledge of vice, virtue, and other things as well, and is, sometimes, called avidya also.¹³ For, it is different from the knowledge of the unqualified and indeterminate Brahma which alone is viewed as being capable of effecting one's final liberation from one's beginningless bondage¹⁴; and it was such knowledge as was generally deemed to be true knowledge in ancient India.¹⁵

1 SBS. I. 2. 2.

2 SBG. XIII. 19.

3 SB. Ait. Up. I. 1. (निराकृतसर्वनामरूपकर्म) 4 SBS. III. 2. 14.

5 SB. Mand. Karika, IV. 1 (ज्ञानज्ञेयज्ञातृभेदरहितं...)

6 Vide SB. Kena Up. I. 5 and SBS. I. 2. 14.

7 Vide SB. Br. Up. IV. 4. 6; SBS. IV. 3. 14.

8 SBS. III. 2. 38.

9 SB. Shvet. Up. IV. 6.

10 SB. Mund. Up. III. 1. 1; Br. Up. III. 7. 9 and SBS. I. 1. 21.

11 Vide SBG. Intro.

12 SB. Mund. Up. I. 1. 4—5; SBS. IV. 3. 14; I. 2. 21.

13 SB. Mund. Up. I. 1. 4.

14 SBS. IV. 3. 14; III. 4. 1.

15 Compare 'sa vidya ya vimuktaye;

Thus, there can be no denying the fact of Shankara's recognition of two forms of Brahma—the one esoteric, ultimate or real and the other exoteric, or phenomenal. For, he has openly declared that "Brahman is apprehended under two forms; in the first place as qualified by limiting conditions owing to the multiformity of the evolutions of name and form (i. e. the multiformity of the created world); in the second place as being the opposite of this, i. e. free from all limiting conditions whatever.¹" And it is not only once or twice but so many times that this distinction between apara, or saguna, or savishesha and para, or nirguna or nirvishe-sha Brahma has been unhesitatingly recognized by him. To take only a few instances of this recognition we may conveniently refer to his commen-tary on Brahma-sutras, I. 1. 19; I. 1. 20; I. 2. 2; I. 2. 14; I. 2. 21; I. 3. 13 and IV 3. 14, on Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, II. 3. 1, and on Prashna Upanishad, V. 1; V. 2 and V. 5: In his commentary on Brahma-sutra, IV. 3. 14, he has raised the question: 'Are there really two Brahman, a higher one and a lower one?', and has answered it by emphatically asserting that 'certainly there are two.' "What then is the higher Brahman, and what the lower?", the opponent is, thereupon, made to ask, and he is told that "Where the texts, negating all distinctions founded on name, form, and the like, designate Brahman by such terms as that which is not coarse and so on, the higher Brahman is spoken of. Where, again, for the purpose of pious meditation, the texts teach Brahman as qualified by some distinction depending on name, form, and so on, using terms such as 'He who consists of mind, whose body is prana, whose shape is light' (Chh. Up. III. 14. 2), that is the lower Brahman."²

Thus, Shankara has left no ground for doubt about his recognition of the two forms of Brahma. But this should not mislead us to think that he believed in two really different Brahmas or that by recognizing two forms of Brahma he contradicted his belief in one ultimate Reality: Shankara has, in fact, plainly told us that it is one and the same Brahma which has been propounded in two different ways, in one way as being 'connected with limiting conditions and forming an object of devotion', and in the other 'as being free from the connexion with such conditions and constituting an object of knowledge.'³ Speaking about Shankara's view in this connection, Prof. Max Muller has rightly observed

1 SBS. I. 1. Anandamayadhikaranam (Thibaut's Trans.).

2 SBS. IV. 3. 14 (Thibaut's Trans.)

3 SBS. I. 1. 11 (Anandamayadhikaranam)

that "it was the highest aim of the ancient Vedanta philosophers to show that what we might call the exoteric Brahman was substantially the same as the esoteric, that there was in reality, and that there could be, one Brahman only, not two."¹

But, then, the question of reconciling the view of two forms of Brahman with a belief in one ultimate Reality, as Shankara had, necessarily arises. If the two Brahmanas spoken of here are equally real, the belief in one Reality has got to be given up; and in case the ultimate Reality is one, the two forms of Brahman mentioned here cannot be real in one and the same sense. The incompatibility between these two views is really too obvious to have been overlooked even by a person of average intellect, nothing to say of a great logician and scholar like Shankara. So, if Shankara has himself referred to it and tried to make his position clear, there is nothing extraordinary in it. Let us see what he says about it.

To appreciate the apparent difficulty involved in the recognition of the two forms of Brahman, on the one hand, and the simultaneous belief in one single Brahman or ultimate Reality, on the other, Shankara has himself made his opponent raise the objection. "Is there not room here for the objection that this distinction of a higher and a lower Brahman stultifies the scriptural texts asserting aduality?", and has, thereupon, maintained that this "objection is removed by the consideration that name and form, the adjuncts (of the one real Brahman), are due to Nescience."² In his opinion "...the highest Brahman cannot, by itself, possess double characteristics; for on account of the contradiction implied therein, it is impossible to admit that one and the same thing should by itself possess certain qualities, such as colour, etc., and should not possess them."³ The real purport of the Upanishadic texts, according to Shankara, does not consist in propounding the lower or qualified Brahman, but in propounding the differenceless para (highest) Brahman which transcends all that can be described in words or can be mentally grasped.⁴ In his opinion, the lordship of Ishvara or lower Brahman is relative to the limiting adjuncts of name and form, just as the universal space as limited space depends upon the limiting adjuncts such as the shape of jars, pots, etc.⁵ Accordingly, he has maintained that "...the

1 TLVP., p. 82; see also p. p. 132-35

2 SBS. IV. 3. 14. (Thibaut's Trans.).

3 SBS. III. 2. (Thibaut's Trans.).

4 Vide SBS. I. 1. 19; II. 1. 14; III. 2. 11; IV. 3. 14.

5 Ibid. II. 1. 14

lord's being a lord, his omniscience, his omnipotence, ect., all depend on the limitation due to the adjuncts whose self is Nescience, while in reality none of these qualities belong to the Self (Brahman) whose true nature is cleared, by right knowledge, from all adjuncts whatsoever."¹

From these assertions of Shankara it is quite clear that he believes in the ultimate reality of the higher Brahma alone; and this, in fact, is quite in keeping with his conception of the true Reality as being altogether immutable and self-existent. The lower Brahma, we are told, is not pure being but being-in-becoming, and so cannot be called truly real. For the element of becoming in it is contrary to the nature of being which the truly Real must essentially be.

This, however, should not be taken to mean that Shankara denied all reality to the lower Brahma or Ishvara. His Ishvara or Lord is as real as the phenomenal world and the individual souls whose Lord he is. As we shall see in chapter V, the world, according to Shankara, is not mere nothing, or illusory in the ordinary sense. It is an empirical world, different from both absolute non-existence and illusory appearances; and its reality from our finite point of view and for all practical purposes has never been questioned by him. This being so, it cannot be maintained that Shankara holds the Creator and lord of the world to be mere nothing or illusory. As we have already seen, it is, in fact, the existence of the Brahma itself that shines forth in everything that appears to be there; and this forbids us to deny all reality to the world of our experience and so to its lord and Creator as well. In its true essence, viz., being, the lower Brahma, according to Shankara, is none other than the absolute Brahma itself. All the same, when viewed as becoming it has got to be declared as unreal; for, 'being' alone can be held to be self-existent, and identical with itself, and hence to be real.

As a matter of fact, the conception of the lower or qualified Brahma is as much a logical necessity as the conception of the unqualified or higher Brahma. The unqualified Brahma or ultimate Reality of the nature of pure being, as we have seen, has got to be posited if we ever seek an ultimate explanation of our experience of the world which as such is of the nature of becoming. But in so far as pure being as such cannot be conceived to give rise to the manifestation or appearance of becoming, it has also got to be conceived as being endowed with some such power as may reasonably make the appearance of becoming possible.

1 Ibid. II. 1. 14, (Thibaut's Trans.).

And this is exactly the conception of the lower Brahma, or being-in-becoming, which in Shankara's terminology is the Brahma conceived as endowed with an inexplicable power called maya. Nevertheless, our conception of the true reality as being immutable and self-existent requires that we should view all becoming, wherever it be, as unreal; and this is what Shankara means when he pronounces all names and forms to be due to Nescience; for, they have no place in the essential nature of the ultimate Reality, the pure Being, the highest Brahma. So, while maintaining his conception of the lower Brahma, Shankara sticks fast to his view that ultimate Reality is one and one only.

V. The indicative epithets or marks of Brahma :—

An indicative mark (lakshana) of a thing is that which serves to make it known to us. A lakshana or indicative mark is generally defined as the statement of the peculiar properties or uncommon characteristics of a thing (asadharana dharmo lakshanam).¹ According to Vedantaparihasha the indicative marks or characteristics are of two kinds—some such as indicate the essential nature of a thing and others those which do not, truly speaking, describe the essential nature of it, and yet serve the purpose of indicating it. The former type of characteristics are called its svarupalakshana, and the latter, its tatasthalakshana.² A tatasthalakshana has been defined as that which, though not always belonging to the object characterized by it, does serve to distinguish it from other things (yavallakshakalamanavasthitatve sati tadvavartakam). For example, being possessed of smell has been said to be a tatasthalakshana of earth; for despite the fact that smell does not exist in the atoms (of it) in the state of 'mahapralaya' (great dissolution), and in the pots, etc., when they are produced, it serves to distinguish the earth-particles from all other things.³ To take another example, a crow may serve to indicate a house on which it is perched, although it does not always remain perched on it.⁴ It will, therefore, be called only a tatasthalakshana of the house, and not a svarupalakshana of it, because it does not indicate its essence.

Shankara has distinguished between a visheshana (adjective) and a lakshana by maintaining that while the former distinguishes a thing which it qualifies from other things belonging to the same class, or falling under

1 The Arthadipika commentary, by Pandita Shivadatta, on Vedantaparihasha, p. 158.

2 Vide Vedantaparihasha, section VII, p. 158.

3 Ibid. p. 159,

4 Vide VPS., Varnaṇa IV, p. p. 645-46,

the same genus, the latter distinguishes the thing it characterizes from all other things.¹ A visheshana or qualifying epithet is meaningful only when there are many things belonging to different classes and capable of possessing different attributes, and not when there is only one thing. For example, when we speak of a blue lotus, the term 'blue' is an adjective of 'lotus'; but when we characterize akasha (space) as that which provides room, the characteristic of providing room, Shankara would say, is a lakshana of akasha.² Accordingly, he has called 'Truth, Knowledge and Infinity' a lakshana of Brahma³, and not a visheshana or qualifying adjunct of it. If these terms are to be viewed as adjectives or qualifying epithets of Brahma, it has got to be borne in mind, Shankara would say, that their primary significance consists in the meaning of 'lakshana' and not in that of a 'visheshana'.⁴ Brahma is only indicated, and not described, by means of them.⁵ However, these indicative epithets of Brahman are not to be taken severally. For, according to Shankara, it is conjointly that they indicate it.⁶

At other places, in place of 'Truth, Knowledge and Infinity', Shankara has called 'Existence, Consciousness and Bliss' to be a lakshana of Brahma.⁷ In point of fact there is no real difference between these two lakshanas or indicative epithets. In the case of Brahma truth and existence, and knowledge and consciousness are one and the same thing; and so can infinity or absoluteness be said to be the same as bliss. While endorsing the view of the sage of the Chhandogya Upanishad, Shankara has rightly maintained that 'because of the absence of desires, etc., which are the virtual seeds of sorrows and sufferings, Brahma, the Absolute, must necessarily be of the nature of bliss.'⁸

Then, 'being the cause of the origin, etc., of the world' has also been recognized by Shankara as a lakshana of Brahma.⁹ But this cannot

1 SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (समानजातीयेभ्य एव निवर्तकानि विशेषणानि विशेष्यस्य, लक्षणं तु सर्वत्र.....)

2 Vide Ibid.

3 SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्मेति ब्रह्मणो लक्षणार्थं वाक्यं); Tattvopadesha, 18 (सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं च ब्रह्मलक्षणमुच्यते)

4 Ibid. (लक्षणार्थप्रधानानि विशेषणानि न विशेषणप्रधानान्येव)

5 Ibid.

6 Vide SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (एवं सत्यादि.....भवन्ति)

7 Aparokshanubhuti, 24 (ब्रह्म.....सच्चिदानन्दलक्षणः)

8 SB. Chh. Up. VII. 23. 1.

9 SBS. I. 4. 1 (ब्रह्मणो लक्षणं.....जन्माद्यस्य यतः) see also SBS, I. 3. 41., and SB. Tait. Up. III. 1.

be said to be a mark of its essential nature (svarupalakshana). For, according to Shankara, as we have seen, Brahma in its essential nature is differenceless, non-related, indeterminate, unqualified, neither cause nor effect, and the like. So, as such it cannot be said to be the cause of the World. This lakshana of Brahma, therefore, has got to be treated as what has been called by the author of the Vedantapariibhasha 'tatasthalakshana'; for, though not directly indicating the essence of Brahma, it may easily be calculated to serve the purpose of indirectly indicating it, much the same as a successful effort to direct the attention of a child towards a particular branch of a tree is very likely to succeed in enabling him to catch sight of the moon shining in the same direction behind it. "The origin, sustenance, and dissolution are characteristics of the world and as such are in no way related to Brahma, which is eternal and changeless....."¹ They cannot, therefore, be said to constitute the essential nature of Brahma, nor can Brahma be conceived as being causally related to them. The category of cause cannot be applied to Brahma which is said to be beyond all intellectual comprehension. But when Brahma is spoken of as 'Truth, Knowledge, and Infinity', it is its svarupalakshana that is said to have been given; for, so to describe it is to indicate its true essence. "These words, though they have different meanings in ordinary parlance, refer to the one indivisible Brahma, even as the words, father, son, brother, husband, etc., refer to one and the same person according to his relation with different individuals."²

The statement that Brahma is the cause of the origin, etc., of the world is by some thinkers sought to be taken as giving the svarupalakshana of Brahma, on the ground that in the second sutra of the Brahma-sutras Badarayana has so described it, immediately after having asserted in the first sutra there-of that 'Brahma should be the (highest) object of one's enquiry'. But in view of the so many negative descriptions of Brahma contained in the Upanishads, the purport of which the Brahma-sutras are said to be, it seems to be more reasonable to treat the second sutra concerned as giving only the tatasthalakshana of Brahma, and not as propounding its svarupalakshana. And so far as the fact of Badarayana's giving a tatasthalakshana, and not svarupalakshana, of Brahma, immediately after his assertion of the desirability of knowing it, is concerned, it can very well be explained by pointing out the sagacity of such a step. For, Brahma in its essential nature being inconceivable,

1 Vireshwarananda : English Trans. of 'Brahma-sutras', p. 25.

2 Ibid. p. 26.

beyond all categories and intellectual comprehension, it simply seems to be quite sensible that an aspirant after its knowledge should at first be told some such thing about it as may serve to direct his mind towards it. And this purpose can rightly be calculated to be served by giving a *tatasthalakshana* of it,

VI. Brahma, a unity of 'being' and 'value'

That Brahma, according to Shankara, is of the nature of pure being, pure consciousness and pure bliss, we have already seen in this very chapter and that Shankara regards the realization of this nature of Brahma in and as our very self as the highest ideal or value of our life, we shall have occasion to see in chapter VII. So, we see nothing wrong in believing that Brahma is an ineffable unity of being and value. The 'bliss' aspect of Brahma's nature, which, in point of fact, is in no way other than its 'being' aspect, may very well be viewed as the greatest possible value that we human beings can ever conceive of. But this, we think, is no reason to hold, like Dr. R. P. Singh, that Shankara's Brahmavada "is primarily and pre-eminently a philosophy of value"¹, much less to hold that "it is out and out a value philosophy."²

If Shankara's Brahma is "a point", as Dr. R. P. Singh says, "where value and existence come together"³, it is giving up that point to speak of it as value. If his Brahmavada is said to be a value philosophy on that ground, it can, on the same ground, be said to be a philosophy of existence or being as well. Either both the concepts, value and being, should be dropped, or both will have to be retained. There is no justification in retaining the one and in dropping the other. And if any one is dropped, though unjustifiably, it should be the 'value' concept and not the 'being' concept; for, the latter is decidedly more fundamental than the former.

Apart from the fact that factual judgements are fundamentally different from judgements of value and, so, cannot as such be reduced to them, it can unhesitatingly be said that all value-judgements necessarily presuppose something, some fact, that is judged. If a factual judgement is about something, a value-judgement is also upon something. This something which involves being or existence is a necessary presupposition of both the types of judgement. So, to reduce existence to value is to cut at the very root of value-judgements. To resolve ontology into axiology is

1 The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 11.

2 Ibid. p. 12.

3 Ibid. Preface, p. ii.

to make the existence of axiology itself impossible. If "our concepts of truth and reality presuppose that truth is better than error, reality better than unreality, in other words, that these distinctions are value-distinctions"¹, our concepts of better and worse, that is, of value-distinctions, all the more presuppose that there is not only something which is better but also something which is worse, that these distinctions are distinctions of facts. To think of values without thinking of things or facts valued is certainly much more difficult, if not impossible, than to think of facts without evaluating them. Moreover, the judgements of value, as much as the judgements of facts, necessarily imply the existence or being of the judging self which, in so far as it judges values, is not itself a value judged. Values are certainly much more subjective, if not wholly so, than facts or existence can ever be said to be. Whether subjective or objective, a value as such is not at least the subject of a value-judgement.

If Shankara's Brahmapada is said to be out and out a value-philosophy simply because he has thought of moksha (liberation) as being the highest good of human life and as something eternal (i. e. of the nature of 'being'), then there is hardly any system of philosophy in India, the Charvaka-philosophy apart, which would not claim to be a value-philosophy: In almost all systems of Indian philosophy which have held liberation to be the summum bonum or highest value of human life, it has also been conceived as something eternal and hence to be most truly real. But such a claim for Indian philosophy in general would not only be not very just, but would also considerably affect Dr. R. P. Singh's claim of originality for Shankara on this account.²

Moreover, the very fact that Shankara has recognized knowledge or intuitive experience, as we shall see in chapter VII, as the only direct means of moksha, and has spoken of knowledge as being dependent upon the object known (vastutantra)³, and of the knowledge of Brahma as having for its object an already existing entity⁴, goes to show that Brahma or ultimate Reality to Shankara is primarily a 'being'. Whenever and wherever Shankara has spoken of the svarupalakshana of Brahma, he has used the words sat (being or existence) and jnana or chit invariably before the epithet ananda (bliss) and never in the reverse order. And

1 The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 23:

2 C/o The Vedanta of Shankara, p. p. 25-26.

3 SBS. I. 1. 4; I. 1. 2.

4 SBS. I. 1. 2 (भूतवस्तुविषयत्वाच्च ब्रह्मज्ञानस्य)

this also goes to show that he gives priority to the 'being' aspect of Brahma rather than to the value aspect of it. In fact, Dr. Singh's own assertions such as 'according to Shankara philosophy has to deal with the value of existence'¹ imply that existence is more fundamental than value; for in speaking of value of existence, the priority of existence to value gets, ipso facto, spoken of.

Dr. Singh says that "For Shankara existence is grounded in value"²; but Shankara himself says that everything is grounded in existence.³ Existence or being, in our opinion, is the most fundamental concept with Shankara. Just as his Karana-Brahma (Brahma in causal state) at no time parts with existence, so also the world which is an effect is, according to him, never without it.⁴ So, to subordinate existence to value is to import something foreign into his philosophy and to put a cart before a horse. Shankara's Brahma should, rightly speaking, be viewed as a perfect unity of being and value. But in case one decides to think of it in terms of only one of these two concepts, it is more reasonable to subordinate the latter to the former rather than the former to the latter.

VII Is Brahma an agent ?

On the basis of such scriptural texts as speak of the seeing, desiring, and acting of Brahma⁵, it is sometimes asked 'Is Brahma really an agent or doer ? And if so, in what sense ?'⁶

Now, in view of what Shankara and the sages of the Upanishads have maintained about Brahma as such it can definitely be said that in its essential nature it cannot be an agent or doer. In the right sense of the term, an agent or doer must be a self-conscious personal being; but Brahma as such, as we have seen, is not a person. It is beyond all distinctions and determinations, perfectly immutable and actionless, and the like. Accordingly it cannot be said to be an agent in any sense whatsoever.⁷ Shankara has explicitly stated that in and by itself the true Self or Brahma neither acts nor makes others act.⁸ So, when he, following

1 The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 265.

2 Ibid. p. 65.

3 SB. Chh. Up. VI. 2. 2 (सत्संस्थानमात्रमिदं सर्वं); VI. 8. 4.

4 SBS. II. 1. 16. See also Katha Up. II. 3. 12, 13, (अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्यः.....) and SB. on them.

5 Chh. Up. VI. 2. 3; Ait. Up. I. 1. 1; Prashna Up. VI. 3. 6 Vide SLS. I. 53.

7 Vide SBG. IV. 13 (अकर्तारम्); II. 21 (सर्वकर्मसम्भव); II. 17

(क्रियाविरोधात्); IV. 32 (निर्व्यापारो ह्यात्मा); SB. Prashna Up. VI. 3

(न सन्न कर्तृत्वम्); SB. Shvet. Up. VI. 12 (आत्मा तु निष्क्रियः)

8 SBG. V. 13 (नास्ति स्वतः कर्तृत्वं कारयितुं च)

the sacred scriptures, speaks of the seeing and other actions of Brahma, the term Brahma has got to be taken in the sense of Ishvara, or Brahma as qualified by the adjunct of maya. Thus, the question 'In what sense is Brahma a doer ?' really pertains to Brahma conceived as qualified, and not to Brahma in itself. All the same, there is some difference of opinion, even among thinkers belonging to Shankara's own school of thought, with regard to the answer to this question.

According to some thinkers the doership of Ishvara consists in his having knowledge, desire and activity (jñānachikirshakritimatva) appropriate to his actions (of creating, preserving, etc., of the world).¹ But others object to this conception of Ishvara's doership or creatorship on the ground that it involves what is called in logic the fallacy of Infinite Regress. According to them desire and activity being themselves effects will require another desire and activity to bring them about, and so on, ad infinitum. So, they hold that the doership of Ishvara consists only in his knowledge appropriate to the actions concerned. This conception of Ishvara's doership, in their opinion, is free from the fault of infinite regress; for, knowledge, being the very nature of Brahma, is not an effect, and so does not stand in need of any cause of itself.² There are, however, others who find fault also with this conception of Ishvara's doership. Their objection to it is this that if doership or creatorship is taken in the sense of mere knowledge appropriate to action or effect, then the individual soul will also have to be admitted as the creator or agent of the objects of the world and of the dream-state. So they maintain that it is not mere knowledge but appropriate dynamic knowledge of the form of 'this is to be created by me' which is required to make one an agent.³

Shankara, of course, has not discussed this question in the way in which his followers felt called upon to discuss it; but so far as we can gather from his assertions pertaining to it, we may say that he favoured the third view mentioned here. For, in his commentary on Aitareyopanishad I. 1. 1-2 he has maintained that Atma or Brahma (Ishvara) created these worlds after having viewed thus : 'I create these worlds' (Lokan.....srije aham.....evamikshitva alochya sa atma iman lokanasrijat). However, it can definitely be said that Shankara could not subscribe to the first view stated here; for he has explicitly asserted that Ishvara is aptakama and has no desire whatsoever to satisfy.⁴

1 Vide SLS. I. 53.

2 Ibid. I. 54.

3 Ibid. I. 55.

4 Vide SBS. II. 1. 33.

VIII Is Brahma omniscient ?**If so, in what sense ?**

Closely connected with the question of the creatorship or doership of Brahma is the question of its omniscience. For, Shankara's main argument for the omniscience of Brahma is based on the conception of its being a creator of this vast and wonderful world.

That Shankara has repeatedly spoken of Brahma as being omniscient (sarvajna, sarvavit) cannot be denied.¹ But in view of the negatively worded descriptions of it one is inevitably called upon to reflect about the right significance of the word omniscient. For, if the word omniscient is literally taken so as to mean the knower of all, it comes into direct conflict with the conception of Brahma as being differenceless, and one without a second, etc. If Brahma is omniscient in the strict sense, the all or many which it knows must be there to be known by it, and so it cannot be devoid of all duality and differences; and in case it is really devoid of all differences and duality, it cannot be omniscient in the sense of knowing all. Either Brahma should not be called omniscient or it should not be viewed as being devoid of all differences and duality. But Shankara, we find, does both the things. Does he, then, by calling Brahma omniscient contradict his firm belief in one unqualified, indeterminate and differenceless Brahma ? Or, does he use the term Brahma, when he speaks of it as omniscient, in the sense of Ishvara ? Or, does he mean by the term 'omniscient' some such thing as is not inconsistent with the essential nature of Brahma ? These are, therefore, the questions which we have to ask ourselves when we come across such passages in Shankara's works as describe Brahma to be omniscient. And in order to get correct answers to these questions it is but desirable to take into consideration some of those passages in which the word omniscient or omniscience occurs and to try to find out if there is any other sense in which Brahma can be said to be omniscient, while retaining its non-duality and differencelessness intact.

Now, if we do so, we find that omniscience is generally predicated of Ishvara² or Brahma conceived as endowed with the inexplicable power called maya. This suggests to us that when Brahma has been spoken

1 SB. Mund. Up. I. 1. 9; SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (सर्वज्ञं तद्ब्रह्म)

SBS. I. 1. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11; II. 1. 22, 37.

2 SB. Isha Up., 8; SBG. III. 3; IV. 4; VIII. 9; XII. (Intro.); XII. 2; XVIII. 63; SBS. I. 1. 2, 5; I. 1. 11, and Anandamayadhikaranam, and so on; SB. Ait. UP. I. 1. 1-2.

of as being omniscient the term *Brahma* has, in all likelihood, been used for qualified *Brahma* or *Ishvara*, and not for *Brahma* in itself. And this belief of ours gets amply strengthened when we find in some of those contexts in which *Brahma* has been said to be omniscient either the words *Brahma* and *Ishvara* interchangeably used or *Brahma* spoken of as being the cause of the origin, etc., of the world, which clearly shows that by the term *Brahma* *Shankara* there means *Ishvara* or qualified *Brahma*, and not unqualified and indeterminate *Brahma*. For example, in his commentary on *Brahma-sutra*, I. 1. 11, having, at first, maintained that omniscient *Ishvara* is the cause of the world *Shankara* has concluded that omniscient *Brahma* is the cause of the world, and not the unintelligent *Prakriti* or anything else. Similarly, in his commentary on the *sutra* I. 1. 2, having defined *Brahma* as the omniscient and omnipotent cause of the world, he has, immediately after that, maintained that the origin, etc., of this world cannot possibly proceed from anything other than *Ishvara* possessing the qualities stated before (viz. omniscience and omnipotence). And so also in his commentaries on *sutras* I. 1. 3, 4, 5; II. 1. 22 and 37 in which omniscience has been ascribed to *Brahma*, this term has definitely been used for *Ishvara*, and not for *nirvishesha* or *nirguna* (indeterminate or unqualified) *Brahma*. Thus, our question 'Does *Shankara*, by calling *Brahma* omniscient, contradict his firm belief in the unqualified, and indeterminate *Brahma*?', gets a negative answer to it. For, in point of fact, it is not the unqualified and indeterminate *Brahma*, but the qualified and determinate *Brahma*, called *Ishvara*, which is designated as the knower of all (omniscient). That which is devoid of all distinctions¹, including the distinction of knower and known, cannot itself be spoken of as the knower of all.

If the distinctionless *Brahma* can be said to be omniscient, it can be said to be so only in the sense of being of the nature of pure knowledge or consciousness which shines in and by itself and is all-in-all in itself, and, as such, the ultimate condition of the illumination

1 *Atmabodha*, 41 (ज्ञातृज्ञानज्ञेयभेदः परे नात्मनि विद्यते)

Vide *SB. Isha Up.* 7 (सकारणस्य संसारस्य अत्यन्तमेवोच्छेदः..... भवति)

SB. Br. Up. II. 4. 14 (तत्र आत्मव्यतिरेकेणान्यस्याभावः)

SB. Chh. Up. VII. 24. 1 (नामरूपयोरेवान्तरभावात् विषयभेदस्य नान्यद्विजानाति) ;

Ibid. (स्वात्मनि दर्शनाद्यनुपपत्तिः) ;

SB. Br. Up. I. 4. 10 (सैववचनवदनन्तरमबाह्यमेकरसम्)

of all,¹ Just as the sun would not cease shining even if there be no object to shine on, in the same way the self-luminous absolute consciousness or Brahma is said to remain ever shining, no matter whether there is or not anything to be illuminated by it. Just as a lump of salt is salt itself, inside and outside, so also Brahma, which has, truly speaking, no inside or outside, is, in its essence, consciousness and consciousness alone. And in so far as no knowledge whatsoever is ever possible without consciousness, Brahma, which is this foundational consciousness, may rightly be said to be omniscient, because it is this consciousness itself upon which depends all actual or possible knowledge of all.

(IX) Is Brahma not knowable ?

That Brahma, as such, is unknowable, inconceivable and ungraspable, seems to be one of the most well-considered views of Shankara.² But, on the other hand, it has also been said to be the highest object of our enquiry³, one by knowing which there remains nothing to be known or worth knowing,⁴ and one which ought to be known, through the Upanishadic texts,⁵ so much so that the assertion that the knowledge of Brahma is not possible has been called by him a daring assertion in view of the inference and scriptures as means of its knowledge being there.⁶ This clearly shows that Shankara did not deny the possibility

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- 1 Vide SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 7. (ज्योतिः-स्वभावः), (विज्ञानमात्रमेव), (ग्राह्यग्राहकविनिर्मुक्तं विज्ञानं), (स्वच्छावबोधव्यवसायमात्रं), (चित्स्वभावज्योतिरूपः); SBG. IX. 10 (दृशिमात्रस्वरूपः);
Ibid. (जगतः सर्वा प्रवृत्तिः अवगतिनिष्ठा अवगत्यवसाना एव);
SB. Kena Up. I. 5. (चैतन्यमात्रसत्ताकम्);
Ibid. II. 4. (संवेदनस्वरूपः);
Ibid. I. 6. (चैतन्यज्योतिः.....अवभासकम्);
SB. Mund. Up. II. 2. 9 (अग्न्यादीनामपिअवभासकम्)
- 2 Vide SB. Kena Up. I. 3, 6-8; SBG. II. 25 (अनिन्द्रियगोचरत्वात् अचिन्त्यः); Tattvopadesha, 17 (न वेद्यः); SB. Br. Up. II. 4. 14; SBS. II. 1. 6, 11.
- 3 SBS. I. 1. 1; SB. Ait. Up. I. 2. 1 (सर्वसंसारदुःखोपशमनाय वेदितव्यः); SB. Br. Up. II. 4. 5.
- 4 Vide SB. Chh. Up. VI. 1. 3, 7; Mund. Up. I. 1. 3; Atmabodha, 55.
- 5 Tattvopadesha, 25 (वेदान्तवाक्य-संवेद्यः); SBS. I. 1. 4 (वेदान्तशास्त्रादेवावगम्यते); SB. Br. Up. III. 9. 26 (उपनिषत्स्वेव विज्ञेयः)
- 6 SBG. II. 21 (तदधिगमाय अनुमाने आगमे च सति ज्ञानं नोपपद्यते इति साहसमेतत्)

of all knowledge of Brahma. What is it, then, that he means by holding the view that Brahma is not knowable ?

Brahma according to the Shankara, as we have seen, is of the nature of pure consciousness; and consciousness, we know, is the most fundamental postulate of all knowledge, nay of all reality. "Even if it be granted that knowledge does not create but only reveal a pre-existent reality; yet it would remain unchallengeable that the external reality could not be revealed to us apart from consciousness which is the principle of revelation."¹ In the words of Prof. T. H. Green, "All mental functions may be materially conditioned; but the material conditions, being constituents of the world of experience, cannot originate or explain the conscious principle which makes that world possible."² Consciousness, thus, being not a phenomenon among the phenomena, the knowledge of which it makes possible, but a necessary implication of all knowledge whatsoever, cannot be known as an object of knowledge. So, if objective knowledge of consciousness is denied, it is but quite consistent with the fact of its undeniable priority to all knowledge. As Shankara has maintained, it cannot be known by means of any sense-organ including the internal organ, viz. the manas or mind, for it is the innermost sense-organ of all sense-organs and the very mind of the mind.³ It cannot be perceived because it lacks perceptual qualities, such as form or colour, and the like, nor can inference, etc., apply to it for there is nothing which can serve as a characteristic sign (linga) of it.⁴ It is, therefore, different from the objects of the process of knowing.⁵

This, however, does not mean that Brahma, the ultimate principle of consciousness, is not known at all. As a matter of fact, it is known in every act or process of knowing.⁶ For, it witnesses all cases of knowledge,⁷ and, so, is indicated by them all as being uniformly present in themselves.⁸ It is, no doubt, concealed to those persons whose minds are stained with vice and villainy; but to others whose intellect is pure and penetrating it is crystal-clear.⁹ If it is not known, it is not known not

1 A. C. Mukerji : The Nature of Self, p. 114.

2 Prolegomena to Ethics: Analytical table of contents, p. xi.

3 Vide SB. Kena Up. I. 2.

4 SBS. II. 1. 6.

5 SB. Kena Up. I. 4; SBS. I. 1. 4.

6 Ibid. II. 4 (बोधं बोधं प्रति विदितं)

7 SB. Mund. Up. II. 2. 9 (बुद्धिप्रत्ययसाक्षी)

8 Ibid. (सर्वप्रत्ययदर्शी.....प्रत्ययैरेव प्रत्ययेष्वविशिष्टतया ल)

9 Praudhanubhuti, 1.

because it is not there but because it is self-shining.¹ Just as a lamp does not require another lamp to illuminate it, so also our true self which is of the nature of knowledge or consciousness itself does not require any other knowledge to make it known.² Its very existence is knowledge (satta eva bodhah).

Thus, it is quite evident that it is only perceptual, conceptual, or objective knowledge of Brahma, and not all knowledge of it, that has been denied by Shankara. In fact, it would be a mistake to think that what is not objectively known is not known at all. Our self, like the categories of Kant, is not, and cannot be, objectively known; but our knowledge of it, though vague it may be, is as certain as, or even more certain than, the knowledge of anything else. As Descartes held, anything may be doubted but the doubt and its doubter cannot be doubted. And according to Shankara the knowledge of the existence of Brahma is as certain as the knowledge of our own existence. Accordingly, Shankara's Brahmvada cannot be placed on the same par with what is known as agnosticism. For, agnosticism as a doctrine denies the possibility of all certain knowledge; but Shankara definitely believes in the possibility of having a perfectly certain knowledge of Brahma, the Ultimate Reality. According to him all means of knowledge have their culmination in one's own direct experience of it.³ And this direct experience is said to be so certain that it cuts at the very roots of all doubts.⁴ Thus, there is a world of difference between Shankara's Brahmvada and agnosticism. In fact, agnosticism as a doctrine is self-contradictory, for in denying all knowledge it also denies its own tenability. If what agnosticism says is true, agnosticism itself must be false; and if agnosticism is a true tenet, what it says is false. Anyway, Shankara at least cannot be said to have subscribed to it. His assertion that Brahma is unknowable is not tantamount to denying all knowledge of it. In the words of Prof. Hiriyanna, "It is true that it cannot be grasped as an object of knowledge. But there may be other ways of experiencing it; and the whole tenor of the advaitic theory of perception as well as its scheme of practical discipline (as we shall see in chapter IV and VII respectively) shows that there is such a form of experience and that we can 'know' Brahma by being it."⁵

1 Tattvopadesha, 17 (न वेद्यं स्वप्रकाशतः)

2 Atmabodha, 29.

3 SBS. I. 1. 4 (अहं ब्रह्मास्मीत्येतदवसाना एव सर्वे.....प्रमाणानि)

4 SB. Mund. Up. II.2.8 (सर्वे.....संशयाः.....विच्छेदमायास्ति)

5 Outlines of Indian Phil., p. 376 (The words within brackets are mine).

(X) Approaches to the knowledge of Brahma

In keeping with Dr. Caird's account of approaches to the knowledge of ultimate Reality, contained in his book 'Evolution of Religion', Prof. Ranade has spoken of three chief types of approach, called cosmological, theological and psychological approaches and characterized by looking outward upon the world around, looking upward and looking inward upon the Self within, respectively ¹ In other words, Reality is, at first, sought in and through the objects around us; then, failing to find it there, people generally indulge in theological speculations and come to believe that there is a supreme Being above all who creates and governs the entire world, and finally man turns inward and tries to have an approach to Reality by looking inside his own self itself. "Man", it is maintained by Dr. Caird, "looks outward before he looks inward, and he looks inward before he looks upward."² But, as it was the case with the sages of the Upanishads, the more natural order of approach to Reality seems to be from looking outward to looking upward and then from looking upward to looking inward.

For brevity's sake we may combine the cosmological and theological approaches into one approach and call it objective approach; for, whether we look around us or upward, we, in fact, look outward and take an objective view of the Reality we want to know. Accordingly, when Shankara conceives Brahma as being the cause of the origin, etc., of the world³ and as the innermost essence of all existence,⁴ and as the ultimate power underlying all agents and potentates,⁵ he can rightly be said to have had recourse to the objective approach to it.

The objective approach to Reality is characteristically the western thinkers' way of trying to know it, and in its thorough-going form it has come to constitute the spirit of the so-called scientific method of enquiry. But this approach has got an inherent defect in it. Irrespective of all that can be said in favour of it, its incapacity to give us direct and indubitable knowledge of the existence and nature of Reality, sought by means of it, is its typical drawback which can by no means be remedied.

1 Vide CS. Up. Phil., p. 247-48.

2 Evolution of Religion, II. 2 Quoted by Ranade in his 'A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy', p. 248.

3 SBS. I. 1. 2; SB. Tait. Up. III. 1.

4 Vide SB. Chh. Up. VI. 12; SB. Mund. Up. II. 1. 1

5 Vide SB. Kena Up. III. 1-12; IV. 1; SB. Isha Up. 4; SB. Tait. Up. II. 8; SB. Br. Up. III. 7. 3-11.

In speculation or inference consists the essential technique of this approach. But the knowledge acquired through the application of speculation or inference is always mediate. No doubt, verification of the hypotheses framed and of inferences drawn, through the observation of actual facts or phenomena bearing on them, lends a good deal of support to their truth; but, strictly speaking, this observation too, to which recourse is thus had, is not a means of truly immediate or direct knowledge, involving as it does the use of sense-organs and mind, if not of external mechanical devices or apparatuses. Apart from the fact that such observation is liable to be erroneous it cannot enable us to see Reality from within it. All that it can do is to give us empirically correct knowledge. Dealing as it does with 'phenomena only, it can never be used as a means of probing into their inmost nature, the noumena in Kant's terminology. That is why no scientist or philosopher who has employed exclusively the objective method of enquiry has ever been able to say with certainty that Reality in itself is 'such', or 'so', and not otherwise. And that is why the Upanishadic sages, as Prof. Ranade has said, 'finding both the cosmological and theological approaches,' which we have called here an objective approach, 'deficient', had 'recourse to the psychological approach.'¹

What Prof. Ranade has called psychological approach we prefer to call subjective approach. For, in it the knowledge of Reality, as we shall soon see, is sought through the knowledge of our true self, the subject of knowledge, and not through the objects thereof. The self sought by the Upanishadic sages, and following them by Shankara, is not the psychological self, but the ontological self, or epistemological subject, which always knows but is itself never an object among other objects, including psychical states or facts known through what has come to be called in psychology the method of introspection. For it the psychical states or activities are as objective as the objects known through the operation of sense-organs. So, to seek it as a psychological fact means as much to miss it as does an attempt to discover it in or among physical or physiological phenomena. Accordingly, the essence of the subjective approach to Reality consists in one's constant endeavour to extricate the true self from all things with which it is erroneously identified.

To begin with, the true self has got to be distinguished from the physical body or bodily self. The physical body, Shankara has maintained, cannot be our self, because it is as much an object of our knowledge as

1 CS. Up. Phil, p. 248.

anything else is. To put it in his own way, 'you are not the body because the body is perceived, because it has form and jati (class), etc., because it is material, impure and non-eternal, while you are non-perceived (perceiver), without form and jati, non-material, pure and unchanging. Your essence lies in knowing. You are, therefore, not the body which is known, just as the knower of a pot is not the pot.'¹

After, thus, having distinguished our self from the gross body we are to distinguish it from our sense-organs as well. So Shankara continues to say: 'you are not the sense-organs: they are instruments (of perception), and you are their mover, and hence different from them; for, an agent (karta) is not any of its instruments. The sense-organs are many, while you are one. You cannot be any one of them, because, you appear in the form of 'I' in all of them. Nor are you an aggregate of the sense-organs, since the 'I' consciousness remains unimpaired even on the destruction of any of them. In case you were an aggregate of the sense-organs, on the impairment of a sense-organ the consciousness of 'I' could not remain unimpaired in you. Nor is also each one of them a (separate) self; for were it so (i. e., if there were many selves in the body), the body would have gone to pieces by reason of being required to follow different masters.'² 'The desires or dictates of many selves (i. e. sense-organs) could not be simultaneously carried out by the body simply because of the great disparity between their spheres of operation. On the analogy of a country under the rule of a single king, the harmony in human behaviour is explicable only on the acceptance of a single self (in each organism).'³

When the self has been, in this way, distinguished from the body and the sense-organs one has got to distinguish it from one's vital breath (prana) and the mind (manas) as well. So Shankara has further told us: "You are neither mind nor vital breath; for, both of them are something unconscious. The distinction of the self from the mind is seen from such experiences as 'my mind had gone elsewhere.'⁴ The vital breath is affected by hunger and thirst, and you are their witness. Just as the knower of a pot is different from it, so you are also different from these states of vital breath, which is experienced as 'mine', (and not as 'I').⁵ You are not the intellect (buddhi) also, because it is unstable and subject to change, in so far as it assumes diverse forms in waking life and lies in a dormant

1 Tattvopadesha, 2. 3; see also Atmabodha, 14, 18 and Aparokshanubhuti, 32. 33.

2 Vide Tattvopadesha, 4-7.

3 Ibid. 8.

4 Tattvopadesha, 9; see also Praudhanubhuti, 3.

5 Ibid. 10.

condition in the state of sound sleep, while you, on the other hand, are essentially conscious and a witness of all its states.¹ What is uniformly present in or along with diverse things or states is definitely different from them (*yat yeshu vyavartamaneshu anuvartate tattebhyo bhinnam*). The self is, therefore, different from all the changing states of mind and intellect in all of which it is present as their witness; and, in so far as it is always experienced as a witness, consciousness must be its essential nature.

Thus, if a person goes on reflecting about the true nature of his self and finally succeeds in having a clear vision of it, he comes to realize beyond all doubt and to his greatest satisfaction that it is the whole and sole Reality, one without a second, and of the nature of pure existence, consciousness and bliss, which he once set himself to enquire into and which he failed to find anywhere else outside himself. And here lies the superiority of the subjective approach over the objective one. The extirpation of all desires to know any thing further and the removal of all doubts, which characterize the culmination of the former approach to Reality, are conspicuous by their absence in the case of the latter. Fullest conviction as to the nature and existence of Reality can be engendered only through the truly immediate knowledge of it, and its truly immediate knowledge is possible only through the subjective approach to it. If the infinite Reality can ever be truly known it can be known only by being it. And to be it means to realize it as our own innermost self; which is possible only through subjective approach to it. What is infinite is not finite, and so cannot be made an object of any kind of knowledge; for an object of knowledge must necessarily be something of finite nature.

(XI) The identity of the individual self with Brahma

The strongest point in favour of the subjective approach to the ultimate Reality consists, as we have seen, in its appropriateness for the immediate realization of this Reality. But such realization is possible only if there be no essential difference between the individual self and the ultimate Reality sought to be realized. Were the individual selves or souls essentially finite as they ordinarily appear to be, no body could ever realize the infinite Self of all in and through his individual self. What is really finite can by no means experience itself as infinite. The fact, therefore, that Shankara, following the sages of the Upanishads, has so indubiously spoken of the realization of Brahma in and through the realization of

¹ Tattvopadesha, 12; see also Laghuvakyavritti, 9, 10, 11.

one's own true Self, necessarily implies that in its essential nature one's true Self is none other than Brahma itself. The ultimate identity of an individual self with Brahma is as much a presupposition of the subjective approach to the Reality as it is the culminating point of this approach to it. Shankara as well as the Upanishadic sages enter into their enquiries about Brahma with the firm belief that there is ultimately only one Reality underlying all; and this, through their subjective approach to it, they fully realize as their innermost self itself. Accordingly, Shankara, like the sages of the Upanishads, has repeatedly dwelt upon this identity of our self with Brahma in unequivocal terms.¹ In fact, it is, as Prof. Paul Deussen has rightly observed, the most fundamental idea of Shankara's Brahnavada,² and its realization, the greatest concern of all human beings. For, in it lies the freedom from all the evils of finitude.

The realization of the identity of the individual self or soul with Brahma, Shankara has maintained, cannot "be objected to on the ground either of uselessness or of erroneousness, because, firstly it is seen to have for its result the cessation of ignorance, and because, secondly, there is no other kind of knowledge by which it could be sublated."³ "Nor can it be maintained that such states of consciousness do not actually arise; for scriptural passages such as, 'He understood what he said' (Chh. Up. VI. 16. 3), declare them to occur, and certain means are enjoined to bring them about, such as the hearing (of the Veda from a teacher) and the recital of the sacred texts."⁴ Nor can it be said that this realization is peculiar to certain states of mind only and is not an ultimate fact; "for the passage 'Thou art that' shows that the general fact of Brahman being the self of all is not limited by any particular state. Moreover, scripture, showing by the instance of the thief (Chh. Up. VI. 16) that

1 See AP, 24 (ब्रह्मैवाहम्), 40, 52, 55 (अयमात्मा हि ब्रह्मैव.....) Atmabodha, 31, 34, 35; Laghuvakyavrittih, 13; Tattvopadesha, 18, 19, 21, 43, 54, 55; SBG. II. 17; II. 54, 59; IV. 25, 35, 41; V. 19; SB. Isha Up., 6 (अव्यक्तादीनां स्यावराजानामहमेवात्मा), 16; SB. Kena Up. II. 1 (स्वात्मा ब्रह्म), SB. Katha Up., II. 4. 4 (साक्षादहमस्मि परमात्मा) SB. Br. Up., II. 5. 19; II. 4. 6; III. 4. 1; IV. 4. 25; IV. 5. 7; SS. Chh. Up., VI. 8. 7 (तत्त्वमसि); VII. 25. 1; SB. Tait. Up. II. 1; II. 7; SB. Mund. Up. III. 2. 9; SB. Mand. Up. 2. (अयमात्मा ब्रह्म); SBS. I. 1. 1 (आत्म च ब्रह्म); IV. 1. 2, 3; II. 1. 14 (ब्रह्मत्मता)

2 Vide Outline of the Vedanta System of Phil., p. 1.

3 SBS. II. 1. 14. (Thibaut's Trans., p. 326).

4 Ibid,

the falseminded is bound while the true-minded is released, declares thereby that unity is the one true existence while manifoldness is evolved out of wrong knowledge."¹ Nor can the doctrine of the ultimate identity of all with Brahma be objected to on the ground that 'all the texts embodying injunctions and prohibitions will lose their purport if the distinction on which their validity depends does not really exist,' or on the ground that 'the entire body of doctrine which refers to final release will collapse, if the distinction of teacher and pupil on which it depends is not real'; for Shankara has maintained that ".....the entire complex of phenomenal existence is considered as true as long as the knowledge of Brahma being the Self of all has not arisen....."²

The conception of the individual soul's identity with Brahma has sometimes been objected to by maintaining that there is essential difference between the two. The one, it is urged, is finite, impure, subject to transmigration, and so on, while the other is infinite, pure, and free from transmigration, and the like. In fact, in his commentary on Brahma-sutra, IV. 1. 3, Shankara has himself made his opponent raise such objections and suggest that this identity of which the scriptures speak should be taken in the same sense in which Vishnu, etc. are taken to be identical with their idols or images (Pratimadishviva Vishnvadi darshnam).

Now, let us see what Shankara has maintained with regard to such objections and suggestions. He says: "The highest Lord must be understood as the self. For in a chapter treating of the highest Lord the Jabalas acknowledge him to be the Self, 'Thou indeed I am, O holy divinity; I indeed thou art, O divinity!'—In the same light other texts have to be viewed, which also acknowledge the Lord as the Self, such as 'I am Brahman' (Br. Uy. I, 4, 10). Moreover certain Vedanta-texts make us comprehend the Lord as the Self, 'Thy Self is this which is within all' (Br. Up. III, 4, 1); 'He is thy Self, the ruler within, the immortal' (Br. Up. III, 7, 3); 'That is the True, that is the Self, thou art that' (Chh. Up. VI, 8, 7). Nor can we admit the truth of the assertion, made by the purvapakshin, that all these passages teach merely a contemplation (of the Lord) in certain symbols, analogous to the contemplation of Vishnu in an image. For that would firstly involve that the texts have not to be understood in their primary sense; and in the second place there is a difference of syntactical form. For where scripture intends the contem-

1 Ibid. p. 323.

2 SBS, II, 1. 14. (Thibaut's Trans., p. 324).

plation of something in a symbol, it conveys its meaning through a single enunciation such as 'Brahman is Mind' (Chh. Up. III, 18, 1), or 'Brahman is Aditya' (Chh. Up. III, 19, 1). But in the passage quoted above, scripture says, 'I am Thou and Thou art I'. As here the form of expression differs from that of texts teaching the contemplation of symbols, the passage must be understood as teaching non-difference. This moreover follows from the express prohibition of the view of difference which a number of texts convey.....Nor is there any force in the objection that things with contrary qualities cannot be identical; for this opposition of qualities can be shown to be false. Nor is it true that from our doctrine it would follow that the Lord is not a Lord. For in these matters scripture alone is authoritative, and we, moreover, do not at all admit that scripture teaches the Lord to be the Self of the transmigrating soul, but maintain that by denying the transmigrating character of the soul it aims at teaching that the soul is the Self of the Lord. From this it follows that the non-dual Lord is free from all evil qualities, and that to ascribe to him contrary qualities is an error.—Nor is it true that the doctrine of identity would imply that nobody is entitled to works, etc., and is contrary to perception and so on. For we admit that before true knowledge springs up, the soul is implicated in the transmigratory state, and that this state constitutes the sphere of the operation of perception and so on.....Hence we must fix our minds on the Lord as being the Self."¹

From these assertions of Shankara it is quite clear that it is not in respect of the empirical but essential or ontological nature of the individual self or soul that he holds it to be identical with Brahma. And this identity, according to him, is not a matter of mere speculation, but an indubitable fact of immediate experience of so many. To those who know themselves to be finite beings encaged inside their physical bodies and have not had the experience of their identity with the Absolute Reality or Brahma this identity would, no doubt, appear to be a fanciful creation of the minds of those who assert it. But to those who have experienced it, it is the highest truth, the most certain knowledge, which makes them pronounce their finitude to be apparent only. Now, who are to be believed—those who only know their finitude, or those who have experienced this finitude as well as their infinite nature? To be fair and just in our judgement, it appears to us that, as a matter of fact, the former are not in a position to say anything about this identity. They can at best say that they at least do not know it. On the other hand, it does

1 SBS. VI. 1. 3. (Thibaut's Trans.)

not seem to be quite reasonable to doubt the verdict of the latter, especially in view of the fact that they are quite sensible and trustworthy persons who have no cause or motive to misguide themselves or others. Moreover our sincere, steady and deep reflection about the essential nature of our self as consisting in consciousness and being different from the objects known, including the body, the senseorgans, the mind and the intellect, also seems to favour the view of its identity with the ultimate principle of consciousness, call it Brahma or by any other name, which, as Green has maintained, seems to be a necessary postulate of both knowledge and nature alike. For, consciousness as such does not and cannot admit of any real chasm, division or difference in itself, much the same as space does not.

XII Evidence for the existence of Self (Atman) or Brahma :—

Strange, indeed, will that person be who while seeing everything in the light of the sun seeks to see the sun with the help of any of the objects illuminated by it. Likewise we would be anything but wise if we were to demand a proof or evidence for the existence of our own self or consciousness. Shankara, therefore, has rightly said that those persons who desire to know consciousness itself with the help of any of the means of knowledge which are themselves illuminated by it, are just like that man who wants to burn the fire by means of its fuel.¹ Nobody's self is unknown to him : it is self-established.² The very enquiry into the means of knowledge is a proof of its existence. Nobody proceeds to know anything whatsoever without previously knowing himself in the form 'I am'.³ One's self is always known in the knowledge or feeling of 'I'.⁴ It is ever established in this feeling.⁵ It is self-shining, and hence self-evident.⁶ Not only in the waking-experience but also in the dream and sleep-states one's self remains constantly self-shining.⁷ The self-luminosity of the witnessing self cannot be disproved even by the most highly self-conceited logicians; for, it is always there as different from whatever is known or desired.⁸ "No one could deny its existence", as Prof. Max Muller has rightly put it, "for he who denies it would be the very self that is denied, and no one can deny himself."⁹ While its existence gets affirmed even in its denial, the knowledge of its non-existence is never possible. As the

1 Praudhanubhuti, 14.

2 SBG. II. 18.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. II. 19.

5 Ap., 32.

6 Tattvopadesha, 17, 24.

7 SB. Prashna Up. IV. 5.

8 Ibid.

9 TLVP., p. 88; see also SBS. I. 1. 4; II. 3. 7.

foundational principle and presupposition of all knowledge the self or consciousness is an undeniable fact.

To deny anything is to think, and to think is to exist as thinker. This truth was very well realized by Descartes when he indubiously asserted : 'I think, therefore I am' (cogito ergo sum). No doubt, Dr. Sinha has rightly pointed out that "Shankara starts with the existence of the Atman, the universal self, which is the ontological reality of the individual self, whereas Descartes starts with the existence of the individual self."¹ All the same the credit of feeling the necessity of admitting a self as distinct from the process of thinking as well as from the objects thought out cannot be denied to Descartes as well. Anyway, it cannot be gainsaid that the existence of self, especially if taken in Shankara's sense, i. e., in the sense of consciousness or principle of consciousness, is the most indubitable fact. It requires no proof, no evidence whatsoever. And in its existence, according to Shankara, lies the surest proof of the existence of Brahma. For, Brahma, according to him, is none other than the innermost self of all, of which every one is always conscious, in so far as every one always feels 'I am' and nobody ever thinks 'I am not'.²

This argument of Shankara for the existence of Brahma, based as it is on the supposition that Brahma is the self of all, involves a belief in the scriptural texts which have propounded Brahma to be so. At another place Shankara has affirmed the existence of Brahma on the basis of some persons' experience of such joy as is not derived from sense-object-contact or from the satisfaction of any specific desire.³ But this affirmation too seems to be based on the Upanishadic assertion that Brahma is bliss. In fact Shankara has openly admitted that the knowledge of Brahma can be acquired with the help of these sacred texts only (Brahma Vedantashastradevavagamyate). This indirectly means that Brahma can definitely be known only through direct experience of it, and not through any extraneous means of knowledge. With Shankara an appeal to the Upanishads is an appeal to the direct experience of the sages, and not an appeal to a mere hear-say or to an opinion based on mere speculation. And the truths so known are, according to him, verifiable in and through one's own direct experience of them, only if one follows the directions of

1 AHIP. Vol. II, p. 486.

2 SBS. I. 1. 1 (सर्वस्यात्मत्वाच्च ब्रह्मास्तित्वप्रसिद्धिः.....प्रतीयात्),

3 Vide SB. Tait. Up. II. 7 (ब्राह्मणानन्दसाधनरहित.....तस्मादस्ति तत्तेषामानन्दकारणं रसवद्ब्रह्म)

those who have already had that experience. Thus the surest evidence for the existence of Brahma is with him experience throughout. But this does not mean that he has not sought to supplement this evidence by means of the evidence of reason. For example, while affirming his belief in the existence of Brahma, the self-existent and perfectly immutable Being, as the ultimate explanation and ground and support of all effects of the nature of becoming, he can definitely be said to have had recourse to the evidence of reason as well.¹

XIII. The 'How' of one's experience of pleasure or joy :

The common belief about the experience of pleasure is that it is derived from the contact of our sense-organs with certain objects. But on little reflection this belief is found to be not well-founded. For, were pleasure a resultant of such contact, it should have ever followed from it; but in point of fact it is not so. Satiety and unpleasantness resulting from the same contact are facts of as common experience as pleasure itself is. Moreover, the fact that all objects are not equally enjoyed by all and that their pleasurable-ness is in a great measure a matter of desire for them, goes to show that pleasure lies neither in the objects nor in their contact with appropriate sense-organs. Does pleasure, then, lie in the satisfaction of desire ? That satisfaction of desires is something pleasant cannot be denied. But the bare recognition of this fact does not adequately explain the experience of pleasure or a pleasant state of mind as such: In the first place, it does not provide an explanation of such pleasant states of mind as are not consequent upon the satisfaction of any explicit desire whatsoever. To have no desire at all is undoubtedly a pleasant state of mind; but this pleasant state is not attained by satisfying desires but by annihilating them. Satisfaction of desires gives rise to, or is, a pleasant state of mind; but all pleasant states of mind do not owe their existence to the satisfaction of a desire or desires. The state of sound sleep is definitely a pleasant state, but its pleasantness is not due to the satisfaction of any desire. The pleasant state of mind of those learned persons, as Shankara has rightly observed, who have neither desires nor external means of satisfying them cannot be said to be due to the satisfaction of their desires in the usual sense.² Secondly, the recognition that pleasure or pleasant state of mind results from the satisfaction of desires does not tell us anything about the source of this pleasure. That pleasure cannot

1 Vide SB. Tait. Up. II. 7 (विशेषश्च विकारः अविकारं च ब्रह्म सर्वविकारहेतुत्वात्...)

2 Vide SB. Tait. Up. II. 7.

be viewed as an attribute of the objects satisfying our desires or as residing in the contact of our sense-organs with them we have already seen, and that it cannot be located in desires is apparent from the fact of our common experience of their unpleasant nature. Wherefrom, then, does this pleasure come ? And how is it that it is experienced in the satisfaction of desires as well as in their absence or annihilation alike ?

According to Shankara, our true Self or *Brahma*, as we have seen, is essentially of the nature of bliss. And it is this our own bliss which in the form of pleasure or joy gets manifested to us when our desires get satisfied or when there is no desire to disturb the equipoise of our mind. A desire creates a sort of tension in the mind, just as a stone when thrown into a lake creates ripples in it. Such a disturbed state of mind is naturally unsuitable to the reflection of the blissful light of the Self, much in the same way as disturbed waters are unsuitable to reflect the light of the sun or any other luminary. But at the time when a desire gets satisfied the mind, as a result of it, becomes calm and quiet and, hence, fit to reflect the bliss-light of the Self. And the same thing can be said about the minds of those persons who are free from desires, cares and anxieties, and the like. Similarly the dim pleasantness that one experiences during the state of sound sleep has also been said to be the clouded experience of the bliss of *Brahma*: In this state, it has been maintained, the mind being tired of its activity, which it ceaselessly performs during the waking and dream states, stops its work and takes rest, as it were, in its ground, the *prana*; and thereupon the reflection of *Brahma*, which the individual soul is figuratively said to be, returns to *Brahma* itself.¹ And this enables the soul or self to have some experience of the pure joy of its own essential nature.

XIV (a) Shankara's *Brahma* and Spinoza's substance :

In many respects Spinoza's substance seems to be very much like Shankara's *Brahma*. Just as *Brahma* is self-existent, changeless, and the ultimate ground and support of all actual or possible objects of experience so also is Spinoza's substance the only uncaused cause of the entire universe. It is like *Brahma* the only reality, "which is in itself and is conceived through itself."² Its conception ".....does not depend on the conception of another thing from which it must be formed".³ It is perfectly free from all change, differences or oppositions alike. It "can neither suffer, nor arise, nor cease to be"; but "persists through all change

1 SB. Chh. Up. VI. 8. 1.

2 Spinoza's *Ethics*, p. 1.

3 Ibid.

and in spite of all division."¹ There is nothing that can exist independently of it; but in its own essential nature it is not at all affected by anything whatsoever. Spinoza has at places called this substance God also, and has maintained that "Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can exist or be conceived without God."² "Both matter and mind do not denote a being outside God; neither do particular things nor phenomena. (*modi*) exist outside God."³ "The material side of existence, no less than the mental, is a revelation of God or substance."⁴ All the same, "It is no more possible that any differences or oppositions should exist within the nature of God, than that anything should exist outside Him."⁵ Just as to Shankara the existence of Brahma is a perfect certainty, so also Spinoza "has no doubt that substance exists. Its existence is given..... its existence is also necessary, because there is nothing which it can exclude."⁶ His conception of substance as one, infinite, indivisible⁷, non-temporal and beginningless and endless reality⁸ does not fail to recall to our mind Shankara's similar conception of Brahma. Just as Shankara has maintained that true reality or existence belongs to Brahma only and that all existence that appears to be there is that of Brahma, so also has Spinoza opined that all existence is of the substance, and that "Existence appertains to the nature of substance."⁹

But this similarity between Spinoza's conception of substance and Shankara's notion of Brahma should not make us close our eyes to the vital difference that exists between them. While Spinoza's substance or "God is the indwelling.....cause of all things"¹⁰, but not their 'transitive (transcendente) cause'¹¹, the category of cause, strictly speaking, is not applicable to Shankara's Brahma as such. As we have seen, being the cause of the origin, etc., of the world-process is only a *tatastha-lakshana*, and not a *svarupalakshana*, of Brahma. In its essential nature it is said to be beyond all categories whatsoever. Even the category of substance which is so conspicuous a characteristic of Spinoza's philosophy is repellent to it. According to Spinoza the ultimate reality, viz., substance, has 'infinite attributes, each of which expresses a certain eternal

1 Hoffding : A History of Modern Phil., Vol. I, p. 312.

2 Spinoza's Ethics, p. 11.

3 Hoffding : A History of Modern Phil. Vol. I, p. 309.

4 Ibid. p. 312.

5 Ibid. p. 308.

6 Ibid.

7 Spinoza's Ethics, p. 10, prop. XIII.

8 Hoffding : History Phil. Vol. I, p. p. 303 and 314.

9 Spinoza's Ethics, p. 4.

10 Ibid. p. 18.

11 Hoffding : A History of Modern Phil., p. 309.

and infinite essence¹; but according to Shankara Brahma in itself has no attribute at all. In fact, the conception of the ultimate reality as substance with mind and matter as its known attributes² does not seem to be very happy, especially for one who believes in one single reality only. No doubt, such a conception has got something to be said in favour of it; but it obviously goes against entertaining the idea of one single substance or reality. As Prof. T. R. V. Murti has observed, "The substance-hypothesis serves two useful purposes; one in conceiving together two or more attributes which do not interpenetrate and sometimes even positively exclude each other. Spinoza's substance with the two mutually excluding attributes thought and extension is a case in point; here the substance is more extensive than the attributes singly taken and there is a real difference between the two, substance and attributes. The second useful purpose is to give permanency to the substance even while the attributes are impermanent, e. g., the Atman of the Naiyayikas. Here too the difference is real, else with the impermanence of the one the other cannot escape a similar fate."³ But, as Prof. Murti goes on to say, "this conception of substance is untenable, as the attributes so adventitiously brought together are independent substances themselves....."⁴ It is true that Spinoza's attributes do not exist independently of his substance; nonetheless they have got to be viewed either as different or as non-different from their substance. But if they are really different from it, the view that there is only one reality gets considerably compromised; and in case they are not-different from, but identical with, it, it is improper to say that they are its attributes. Anyway, Shankara's conception of Brahma is not that of a substance possessed of attributes, and in this respect there is a fundamental difference between it and the substance of Spinoza.

(b) Schelling's Absolute and Shankara's Brahma :

As from Spinoza's substance so also from Schelling's Absolute Shankara's Brahma should clearly be distinguished. It is true, no doubt, that with Schelling "Nature and mind, being and thought, are not....., as Spinoza held, two parallel aspects of the Absolute, but different steps or stages or epochs in the evolution of absolute mind"⁵, that he regards intuition, philosophical, artistic, or religious or mystical, as the only means of the direct realization of the Absolute, and that he speaks of the

1 Spinoza's Ethics, p. 7.

3 PQ., April, 1930, p. 60.

5 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 451.

2 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

soul's stripping off its selfhood and becoming absorbed in the Absolute in and through a mystical intuition¹, all the same his Absolute stands in clear contrast with Shankara's Brahma. For, unlike the latter, the former is not an immutable and static entity or being, but a dynamic, 'creative, purposive principle of evolution, which develops from unconsciousness to consciousness'², and from consciousness to self-consciousness.³ It 'has a history'⁴ which Brahma, truly speaking, has not. In Prof. Thilly's words, "In its developed state, Schelling's philosophy is a form of pantheism, in which the universe is conceived as a living, evolving system, as an organism, in which every part has its place and subserves the whole. In this sense, subject and object, form and matter, the ideal and the real, are one, together and inseparable; the one is the many, and the many are one."⁵ Thus, Schelling's Absolute which is of the nature of an organism cannot exist apart from its constituent parts; but Shankara's Brahma in its essential nature transcends everything which is changing and of finite nature.

XV Shankara's Brahmavada, a synthesis of broad Empiricism and enlightened Rationalism

Western Empiricism, as a theory of knowledge, attaches all importance exclusively to experience. According to it experience is the only source of all knowledge. Man's mind, as Locke maintained, is, to begin with, simply a 'tabula rasa', a clear slate on which nothing is written, and it is through one's later experiences only that knowledge in the form of ideas gets written on it. Rationalism, on the other hand, extols the claims of reason. It is a sort of antithesis to empiricism. It holds that reason itself is quite sufficient to serve us as a source of certain knowledge. But in point of fact both these views are one-sided. And their one-sidedness was rightly realized by Kant when he observed that 'Percepts without concepts are blind' and that 'concepts without percepts are empty'. Both percepts and concepts have their own spheres of operation, and towards our acquisition of knowledge both have got their own legitimate contributions to make. Their co-operation or synthesis is as essential for knowledge as are warp and woof both for weaving a piece of cloth. No one of them can be used as a substitute for the other. While reason or understanding cannot furnish us with sense-data and cannot enable us to have a direct cognition of the objects of our knowledge, bare experience, on the other hand, cannot establish relations between them. The word 'experience', however, should not be restricted, as, unfortunately, it has

1 Vide Ibid. p. 458.

2 Ibid. p. 453.

3 Vide Ibid. p. p. 451-53.

4 Ibid. p. 451.

5 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 455.

been generally done in the west, to sense-experience or perception only. The so-called intuitive or mystic experiences as well as the experiences of a dream-state or of sound sleep are, rightly speaking, as good or bad experiences as those of waking-life. Any account of knowledge which excludes them cannot rightly claim to be an adequate account of it.

Just as a true rationalist should not fail to mark the limitations of reason, so also a thorough-going empiricist should not narrow down his experience to sense-experience only, and a sincere seeker of truth should not fail to recognize the due claims of both reason and experience. What is really required is a proper synthesis of broad empiricism and enlightened rationalism. And this we adequately find in Shankara's Brahmvada. As we shall see in Chapter IV, it has duly recognized the serviceableness of all sources of knowledge, perception, inference, testimony, etc. What needs to be clearly borne in mind in connection with the knowledge of Brahma or our true Self is that Shankara has given both reason and experience their due. Neither of them has been belittled; neither of them has been over-emphasized. In so far as he has not failed to employ reasoning while discriminating the true Self from the psychological self and while establishing the true nature of reality as consisting in immutability, self-existence, etc., he has rightly played the rationalist; but while maintaining that the direct and indubitable knowledge of Brahma is possible only through intuition or direct experience he has recognized at once the limitations of reason and the peculiar prerogative of experience. His Brahmvada may thus be called a happy synthesis of rationalism and empiricism, of course understanding empiricism in its broad or thorough-going sense. If 'we may call all philosophy empirical, so far as it is based on grounds of experience'¹, and if 'the mystics are the only thorough-going empiricists'², if 'intellectual life is not the whole of our life'³, and if true rationalism is that which does not press the claim of reason beyond its legitimate limits, but, like Bradley and Bergson, recognizes the shortcomings of reason itself, Shankara's Brahmvada, we may hold, has every right to be viewed as an example of empirico-rationalism par excellence. And that it is so will become further clear from our subsequent account of it, especially from the last chapter in which an attempt has been made to maintain that it is a sincere philosophical endeavour, and not mere mysticism,

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1 Kant's 'Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics' translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, preface, p. 2.

2 An assertion of J. Royce quoted by S. Radhakrishnan in his 'The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Phil.', p. 22.

3 The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, p. 434.

4

The World and Individual Souls

- 'क्रियाकारकफलभेदो हि संसारः' शंकर (छां. उप. भा. ७.२४.१)
'अस्य जगतो नामरूपाभ्यां व्याकृतस्यानेककर्तृभोक्तृसंयुक्तस्य
प्रतिनियतदेशकालनिमित्तक्रियाफलाश्रयस्य मनसाप्यचिन्त्य-
रचनारूपस्य जन्मस्थितिभंगं यतः सर्वज्ञात्सर्वशक्तेः कारणा-
द्भवति तद्ब्रह्म' शंकर (ब्र. सू. भा. १.१.२)

Chapter 4

THE WORLD AND THE INDIVIDUAL SOULS

(I) The constituents of the world

Shankara has compared the world to a vast ocean. 'The sorrows and sufferings which result from ignorance, desire and the performance of evil deeds are its water, and the acute diseases, old age and death which it is full of, its terrible crocodiles. Its many evils are its hundreds of high waves which are aroused on account of its being disturbed by the wind of the five sense-organs' craving for their objects. There is in it a great din and noise created by the shrieking and crying of numerous creatures in manifold hells like maharaurava. Scanty pleasure born of sense-object-contact is its momentary resting place. Its only boat is knowledge which, for the journey across it, is laden with the food-articles of the individual souls' moral virtues, such as truth, straightness (*saralata*), generosity, kindness, non-violence or love (*ahimsa*), self-control, fortitude, and the like. Good company and renunciation or non-attachment are the only routes for its boat to move along, and the liberation from bondage is the only coast of this ocean.'¹

Though hardly systematic and exhaustive this figurative description of the world gives us in brief a fairly good account of its characteristic features or contents. The contents or, better, constituents of the world are indeed too many to be severally mentioned. If they can at all be enumerated, they can be enumerated only by means of mentioning their classes or kinds. And in the above-stated description of the world we find a fairly good attempt to enumerate them in this way. By referring, as it does, to individual souls, their senses and sense-objects, ignorance and knowledge, good and bad company, desires and deeds, disease, decay and death, virtues and vices, evil and good, and pain and pleasure, it at once serves to bring out the physical as well as the social and moral aspects of the world. Broadly speaking, the world, we may say, has two sides,

1 SB. Ait. Up., I. II. 1.

subjective and objective. Its subjective side comprises of the psychical activities or states, such as knowing, feeling and desiring or willing, along with their synthetic unity, the knowing feeling and desiring psychological subject or self, and its objective side may be said to be constituted of whatever is, or can be, objectively known, our own bodies with their changing states included. And both these sides of the world have been fairly well touched upon in the above-stated figurative description of it.

To take up an instance of Shankara's non-figurative description of the constituents of the world we may conveniently refer to his commentary on Prashna Upanishad, IV, 8, where he has mentioned the five gross elements along with their qualities and causes, viz., the five subtle or potential elements (tanmatras), the five sense-organs and the five motor-organs along with their objects, the inner-organ with its four forms—manas, intellect, chitta and ahankara—together with their objects, the thread-like vital air (sutratmaka parana) and all that which it connects, teja, i. e., skin qualified by light and different from the sense-organ of touch¹, along with the objects it illuminates, and the reflection of the universal Self which, like the reflection of the sun in water, has entered (the different bodies) and appears to be an agent and enjoyer.² In short, all names and forms (objects and their qualities), agents and actions, and their fruits go, according to Shankara to form the constituents of the empirical world.³

At some places Shankara has classified the contents of the world into stationary and mobile (sthavara and jangama, or achara and chara)⁴, while at others into enjoyers and the objects of their enjoyment⁵, or into animate and inanimate objects⁶. And the hills, etc., are cited as the examples of the stationary and inanimate ones⁷. In this connection what

1 (By it Shankara seems to mean something like what is meant by local-signs in the skin in modern psychology).

2 SB. Prashna Up. IV. 8; see also SBG. XIII. 3.

3 SB. Chh. Up. VII. 24. 1 (क्रियाकारकफलभेदो हि संसारः);

SB. Isha Up. 5 (जगतो नामरूपक्रियात्मकस्य);

SBS. I. 3. 22 (अस्य नामरूपक्रियाकारकफलजातस्य);

SBS. I. 1. 2 (अस्य जगतो नामरूपाभ्याम् व्याकृतस्यानेककर्तृभोक्तृसंयुक्तस्य..... क्रियाफलाश्रयस्य.....); see also SBS. II. 2. 1.

4 SBG. VIII. 18; IX. 10.

5 SBS. II. 1. 13.

6 SB. Br. Up. I. 5. 2 (यच्च.....प्राणवेष्टावक्ष्यन् न)

7 Ibid. (स्थावरं शैलादि)

deserves to be specially noticed is his recognition of the different forms of living beings, both higher and lower than man, according to the nature and extent of knowledge or consciousness, etc., they possess. In his opinion, "as in the series of beings which descends from man to blades of grass a successive diminution of knowledge, power, and so on, is observed although they all have the common attribute of being animated so in the ascending series extending from man upto Hiranyagarbha, a gradually increasing manifestation of knowledge, power, etc., takes place....."¹ To many a man, especially in the west, the recognition of life even in plants and herbs may strike as a modern discovery made by Sir J. C. Bose, but by the ancient Indian thinkers in general and by Shankara in particular life and some sort of inner consciousness even in plants was deemed to be an indubitable fact (अन्तः संज्ञा भवन्त्येते सुखदुःखसमन्विताः).

The entire world or universe, according to Shankara, is inconceivably vast and contains a series of sectional worlds or lokas, such as Bhu, etc.² Heaven and hell have also been recognized, where people go after death, by different routes, to reap the fruits of their good and bad actions respectively.³ Each loka or sectional world is said to be under the supervision of a separate governor (lokapala) who has been appointed by the Supreme Lord of all to look after its protection.⁴ All this goes to show that the world, according to Shankara, is not a mere fanciful creation of an individual person's mind, which is openly declared by him to be incapable of even conceiving its construction and orderly arrangement⁵, nothing to say of creating it: The places, times, and causes of its constituent objects, qualities and phenomena, which are the fruits of the individual persons' actions, are definitely determined for them.⁶ They cannot therefore be the mental creations of the individuals themselves.

1 SBS. I. 3. 30 (Thibaut's trans.)

2 Ibid. (भूरादिलोकप्रवाह); SBG. I. Intro. (अण्डस्यान्तस्त्वमे लोकाः सप्तद्वीपा च मेदिनी); SB. Ait. Up. I. 1. 2 (अम्भः प्रभृतीन् लोकानसृजत्); SB. Isha Up. 4 (ब्रह्मलोकादीन्गच्छति); SBG. VIII. 16. 17.

3 SBG. IX. 3; SB. Isha Up., 10, 18.

4 SB. Ait. Up. I. 1. 3.

5 SBS. I. 1. 2 (मनसाप्यचिन्त्यरचनारूप)

6 Ibid. (प्रतिनियतदेशकालनिमित्तक्रियाफल.....)

II. The Creation of the universe :

(a) The Vaisheshika view of creation and its criticism by Shankara :
The Vaisheshika view of creation is known as paramanuvada or atomism. According to it the atoms are the minutest possible parts or constituents of things which mark the limit of their further division into minuter parts. Corresponding to the four elementary substances, viz., earth, water, fire, and air there are assumed to be four different kinds of atoms. At the time of creation, it is said, motion at first starts in the aerial atoms due to their conjunction with the souls to which merit and demerit (adrishta) belong. This motion joins one atom to another atom, and results in the formation of dyads or binary compounds (dvyanuka). When three dyads get combined a triad (tryanuka or trasarenu) is formed. While a dyad is imperceptible, a triad is said to be the minutest perceptible object. From the combination of triads are formed other larger compounds, and thus the element of air is produced.¹ 'In a like manner are produced fire, water, earth, the body with its organs. Thus the whole world originates from atoms: From the qualities inhering in the atoms the qualities belonging to the binary compounds are produced, just as the qualities of the cloth result from the qualities of the threads.'² This, in brief, is the earlier Vaisheshika view of the creation of the non-eternal part of the world. In it God is not recognized as the creator of the world.

Shankara in his criticism of this view mainly dwells upon its failure to explain the initial motion in the atoms. The conjunction of the isolated atoms, which, according to the Vaisheshikas, is the starting point of the creation of the world, requires motion or action in them to bring itself about. But this action, according to Shankara, is not explicable if we admit the view entertained by the Vaisheshikas. The cause of an action, as we know, is either endeavour (prayatna) or impact (abhigata). But neither of them is possible in the case of the initial motion or action of the atoms. "For in the pralaya state endeavour, which is a quality of the soul, cannot take place because no body exists then. For the quality of the soul called endeavour originates when the soul is connected with the internal organ which abides in the body. The same reason precludes the assumption of other seen causes such as impact and the like. For they all are possible only after the creation of the world has taken place, and cannot therefore be the causes of the original action (by which the world is produced). If, in the second place, the unseen principle is assumed as

¹ Vide SBS. II. 2. 12.

² SBS. II. 2. 12 (Thibaut's Trans.).

the cause of the original motion of the atoms, we ask : Is this unseen principle to be considered as inhering in the soul or in the atom ? In both cases it cannot be the cause of motion in the atoms, because it is non-intelligent."¹ Intelligence, according to the Vaisheshikas, being only an adventitious quality of the soul, in so far as it is said to belong to it only when it is possessed of the internal organ, the soul which is devoid of intelligence prior to its conjunction with the internal organ (i. e., before the actual creation of the world) cannot be assumed to act as a guide to the unseen principle (*adrishta*). Moreover, on the assumption that the unseen principle inheres in the souls and not in the atoms, it cannot account for the action or motion in the latter with which it has no relation at all. If, on the other hand, a relation between it and the atoms is assumed by assuming some sort of connection between the atoms and the souls in which it inheres, then from the uninterrupted continuity of this connection resulting from the all-pervading nature of the souls it would necessarily follow that the action in the atoms would never cease, and consequently there would never arise an occasion for the dissolution of the world which has been admitted by the Vaisheshikas themselves.² So, for them there would either be a ceaseless creation or no creation at all.

Moreover, it is inconceivable how two atoms which have no parts can come together. Conjunction of things is possible only in two ways, either through their total interpenetration or by means of their partial penetration into one another. But in case two atoms are imagined to conjoin each other in the former way, there would be no increase in their size, with the result that they would ever remain atomic or imperceptible in size. On the other hand, if their interpenetration is said to be partial, it would have to be admitted that they are composed of parts. But neither of these consequences is welcome to the Vaisheshikas. Nor can they maintain that the atoms consist of imaginary parts. For, if they did so, it would follow that the conjunction of atoms is also imaginary. In other words, it would be tantamount to admitting that all objects of our perception are imaginary only, and not real. For no real object can be produced from the imaginary conjunction of atoms. But this is again against the Vaisheshikas' well-cherished view that the objects we perceive are real and have really been produced from the atoms through the real formations of dyads, triads, etc.³

1 SBS. II. 2. 12. (Thibaut's Trans.),

2 Vide SBS. II. 2. 12.

3 Vide SBS. II. 2, 12,

"Moreover, the atoms would have to be assumed as either essentially active (moving) or essentially non-active, or both or neither; there being no fifth alternative. But none of the four alternatives stated is possible. If they were essentially active, their activity would be permanent so that no pralaya could take place. If they were essentially non-active, their non-activity would be permanent, and no creation could take place. Their being both is impossible because self-contradictory. If they were neither, their activity and non-activity would have to depend on an operative cause, and then the operative causes such as the adrishta being in permanent proximity to the atoms, permanent activity would result; or else the adrishta and so on not being taken as operative causes, the consequence would be permanent non-activity on the part of the atoms. For this reason also the atomic doctrine is untenable."¹

The Vaisheshika doctrine of the creation of the world from atoms is further objectionable due to its involving the fault of regressus ad infinitum in respect of the relation which the atoms are said to have with the binary compounds (dvynuka) imagined to be formed from them. Though admitted to be absolutely different from the atoms a binary compound is held to be connected with them by means of what is called the relation of inherence (samavaya sambandha). But this relation of inherence, being as much different from the terms it relates as these terms themselves, viz., the binary compound on the one hand and the atoms on the other, are, from one another, would require another similar relation to relate it with the terms it relates. And in this way this process of positing one relation of inherence after another would have to be continued ceaselessly. In case the Vaisheshikas try to set aside this objection by pointing out that the relation of inherence is a matter of our every-day experience as being eternally connected with the things it relates and as not requiring another relation of inherence to connect itself with them, they would have to admit the same thing with regard to the relation of conjunction (samyoga sambandha) which can also likewise be said to be eternally connected with the objects it conjoins. But this would openly go against their assertion that the relation of conjunction is connected with the things it conjoins by means of the relation of inherence. To maintain that conjunction needs another relation to relate it with the things it conjoins, for it is different from them, would be of no avail. For, then, it can equally well be urged that the relation of inherence also must require another relation to connect it with the terms it relates, because

1 SBS, II. 2. 14 (Thibaut's Trans.),

it is as much different from them as the relation of conjunction, from its relata. Nor can the Vaisheshikas justify their view by holding that the relation of conjunction is a quality which the relation of inherence is not. For, the difference from the terms which they relate is equally present in both the cases. Moreover, it is not a peculiarity of quality only to require the relation of inherence to connect it with its substrate. Action, etc., also, according to the Vaisheshikas themselves, stand in need of the same relation for similar purposes. Thus the Vaisheshikas who hold inherence (samavaya) to be an independent category cannot help being dragged into regressus ad infinitum. And this also discredits their doctrine of creation from atoms. When even the formation of a binary compound from them is beset with insurmountable difficulties, how can the Vaisheshika account of creation of which this formation of binary compounds constitutes the first essential step deserve to be taken as a correct one?¹

The fundamental assumption involved in the atomic doctrine of creation is that the atoms are indivisible and, hence, permanent and the ultimate constituents of all perceptible objects. But, at the same time, these atoms are said to be possessed of the qualities of colour, etc. But according to Shankara whatever possesses qualities like colour is an effect. So atoms also must be the effects of some cause which is subtler and finer as compared to them. They cannot therefore be held to be the ultimate cause of the world.²

We perceive only one quality, viz., touch in air, two qualities, viz., touch and colour in fire, three qualities, viz., touch, colour and taste in water, and four qualities, viz., touch, colour, taste and smell in earth. And we know from our experience that the effects owe their qualities to the qualities of their causes. Accordingly the qualities of air, etc., must be present in their ultimate causes, the atoms. Now, there are only three possible ways in which these qualities of the elements may be supposed to be present in the atoms. Either we may suppose that all the atoms possess all the four qualities, or one quality only, or that the separate atoms of air, fire, etc., possess the corresponding qualities of these elements respectively. In the first case, all the four qualities must be perceptible in all the four elements, while in the second case only one quality must be perceived in all of them. But neither of these two consequences is a fact of our actual experience, for we actually perceive neither all the four qualities nor only one quality in all of them. So the only alternative left with

1 Vide SBS. II. 2. 13.

2 SBS. II. 2. 13.

us is to hold that the earth atoms have all the four qualities of earth, the water-atoms the three qualities of water, the fire-atoms the two qualities of fire, and the air-atoms only the one quality of air. But on making such an assumption we are required to admit that the earth-atoms must be larger in size than water-atoms, the water-atoms larger in size than fire-atoms, and the fire-atoms larger than air-atoms. But this admission implies that they are no longer atoms. So, this consideration also makes us reject the atomic doctrine of creation.¹

Asatkaryavada and its criticism by Shankara :

Connected with the Nyaya-Vaisheshika doctrine of creation is their doctrine called Asatkaryavada or Arambhavada, according to which an effect does not pre-exist in its cause, but has a new origination or beginning when it is produced. Shankara, on the other hand, is a staunch believer in Satkaryavada and has, accordingly, strongly maintained that an effect exists in its cause even before its origination. According to him Asatkaryavada is not only against the definite view of the scriptures which have declared the origination of the sat from asat (non-existent) as impossible², but also against all sources of valid knowledge (pramanas).³ To say that sat originates from asat is to say something very improper, for it is tantamount to saying that asat becomes sat and sat, asat.⁴ The following are some of the points that Shankara has urged against the Nyaya-Vaisheshika Asatkaryavada :—

An effect is obtained only when its cause is present, and not in its absence. For example, an earthen jar is produced only when earth is there, and a cloth, only when threads are there.⁵ This shows that the effect must somehow be present in its cause, or else it could be produced even in its absence. "A thing.....which does not exist in another thing by the self of the latter is not produced from that other thing; for instance, oil is not produced from sand."⁶ The fact that persons wishing to produce definite effects like curd, earthen jar, or gold ornaments make use of definite causal materials such as milk, clay and gold respectively goes to show that their desired effects are present, even before their appearance, in these

1 Vide SBS. II. 2. 16.

2 SBG. III. (Intro.); SB. Chh. Up. VI. 2. 2.

3 SBG. IV. 18 (सर्वप्रमाणविरोधात्)

4 Ibid. (असतः.....तच्चायुक्तम्)

5 SBS. II. 1. 15 (भाव एव.....तत्पु पटः)

6. Ibid. II. 1. 16 (Thibaut's Trans.).

materials. For, were it otherwise, one could very well employ clay to produce curd and milk to produce an earthen jar. Were an effect before its actual origination as non-existent in its cause as it is elsewhere, it could have been produced from anything whatsoever, for so far as its non-existence is concerned it is, if *asatkaryavada* be true, exactly the same everywhere. Why is then curd produced from milk only, and not from clay, and earthen jars from clay, and not from milk also ?¹

If 'the *asatkaryavadin* rejoins that there is indeed an equal non-existence of any effect in any cause, but that at the same time each causal substance has a certain capacity reaching beyond itself (*atishaya*) for some particular effect only and not for other effects', he may very well be asked as to what it is that he means by *atishaya*. If he means by it an 'antece-
dent condition of the effect (before its actual origination)', he virtually bids good-bye to his doctrine according to which 'the effect does not exist in the cause' and subscribes to the doctrine of *satkaryavada*. If, on the other hand, he means by it 'a certain power of the cause' by virtue of which only one determined effect is produced from it, he will be obliged to admit that this "power can determine the particular effect only if it neither is other (than cause and effect) nor non-existent; for if it were either, it would not be different from anything else which is either non-existent or other than cause and effect, (and how then should it alone be able to produce the particular effect ?) Hence it follows that that power is identical with the Self of the cause, and that the effect is identical with the self of that power."² Accordingly the effect must be admitted to be existing in its cause in the form of its power.

The activity of a causal agent must have an object for itself. But in case the effect is taken to be non-existent before its actual origination, it cannot be this object, much in the same way as ether cannot be struck by any weapon whatsoever. Nor can its inherent cause be said to be this object. For to hold it as such would mean to hold that an activity which has something else for its object has something else for its result which is different from its object. This wrong conclusion can, of course, be avoided by maintaining that the effect is not really something different from its inherent cause but a certain power of it; but to say so would mean to admit that the effect exists, even before its actual origination, in its cause.³

1 SBS. II. 1. 18.

2 Ibid. (The words within inverted commas are from Thibaut's English Trans.).

3 SBS. II. 1. 18.

All action, according to Shankara, requires something or some being in which it inheres. For instance, the action or activity of walking cannot take place without there being an agent to walk. Similarly origination also, being an action, must have something to inhere in. But if the effect, say a jar, does not pre-exist in its cause, it would follow that its origination is without an agent. It cannot be said to inhere in the jar, for the jar according to *asatkaryavada* does not exist before its origination; nor can it be said to inhere in its cause, the clay, for it is not the clay that originates. And in case it is maintained that it resides in the potter and other operative causes, then it would follow that 'to say that the jar is originated' is the same as to say that the potter, e.c., are originated. But these two assertions are never actually taken to mean the same thing. The potter, etc., do not originate at the time when the pot originates. Their existence before its origination is a matter of common experience.¹ Nor can the *asatkaryavadin* maintain that the origination of an effect is its connection with the existence of its cause. For what has not yet come into existence cannot possibly have any positive connection with anything whatsoever.²

As to the *asatkaryavadin's* contention that in case the effect is admitted to be already present in its cause, the activity of the causal agent would be rendered purposeless, Shankara has maintained that the purpose of the efforts of a causal agent lies not in bringing about something out of nothing, but in arranging the causal substance in the form of a particular effect.³ An effect, according to him, is only an aspect of the cause itself, and not a different substance. The mere appearance of a thing in a particular form does not turn it into a different thing.

(b) The *Pradhanakaranavada* and its untenability

According to the *Samkhya* system of philosophy the whole world is the result of the evolution of *prakriti* or *pradhana*. The *Samkhya* is a dualistic system of philosophy, for it believes in two types of ultimate reals—*Purushas* and *Prakriti*. Its *purushas* or souls are many and of the nature of intelligence, but inactive, while its *prakriti* is one, unintelligent, but active. The *prakriti* is composed of three *gunas*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, which are not its qualities but constituents, and exist in a state of perfect equilibrium before the process of creation or evolution of the world actually starts. And this is said to happen when *prakriti* comes

1. SBS. II. 1. 18.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

into contact with the purushas. Apart from the fact of this contact the purushas have nothing to do with the process of evolution. Unconscious prakriti by itself, without being guided by any intelligent being, spontaneously produces all the effects, and that in order to subserve the purpose or purposes of the conscious purushas. And so far as the question of supporting this view is concerned the followers of this system of philosophy have only tried to take recourse to citing seemingly parallel instances of spontaneous activities of unconscious things, such as the flowing of milk from the udders of a cow or of water on the ground, and the like.

Shankara, however, is vehemently opposed to this Samkhya conception of creation from the unconscious prakriti or pradhana. According to him the world does not present to us any instance of a non-intelligent thing producing effects spontaneously, without the guidance of an intelligent being, so as to subserve the purpose of a particular individual or individuals. On the other hand, it is observed that things, such as houses, palaces, couches and pleasure-grounds, which are fit to serve as means of our attaining pleasure and avoiding pain, are constructed by intelligent workmen.¹ Shankara therefore believes it to be unreasonable and opposed to our common experience to regard the non-intelligent pradhana as the first cause of this wonderful and well-designed world, evincing orderly arrangement and subserving the complex purpose of providing diverse fruits to innumerable various sentient creatures according to their merit and demerit.²

Even if it be supposed that the non-intelligent pradhana is capable of creating such a well-designed and purposeful world, the inexplicability of its initial activity still stands. As inanimate or non-intelligent substances like clay are never seen to give rise to an activity, and as our judgements about what is not an object of our actual experience are to be based upon what is actually seen, we are quite justified in holding that the non-intelligent pradhana cannot by itself start its initial activity. It is, of course, true that we do not observe activity in purely intelligent beings also. But it does not justify the assertion that activity takes place in non-intelligent things left to themselves. Despite the fact that an activity is observed in non-intelligent things, such as chariots, and not in a pure intelligent being, it cannot be denied that it is always due to the latter. For, it is present only when the latter is there to make it possible, and absent when the latter does not exist to give rise to it. Non-intelligent things like chariots are observed to move only when there is some

1 Vide SBS, II. 2. 1.

2 Vide Ibid.

intelligent being to move them, and not otherwise.¹ The Samkhya-suggestion that the non-intelligent pradhana may move like such non-sentient things as milk and water is also, according to Shankara, of no avail. For even the flowing of milk and water is not, truly speaking, an absolutely independent activity of theirs. The activity involved in the flowing of milk may well be attributed to the wish of the cow which is an intelligent being and loves her calf, while the flowing of water is due to the declivity of the land and to other such conditions; and not an absolutely independent activity of it.² Moreover, Shankara who has subscribed to the scriptural view that it is the omniscient Lord of all who supervises and directs all the activities of the entire material world, cannot concede to take the example of water as an exception to the rule that all activities are ultimately initiated by conscious beings.³

The Purushas of the Samkhya system of philosophy are altogether indifferent to action. In their essential and ultimate nature it is not upto them either to start or to stop any action. So, to attribute the initial activity of the pradhana to them would mean to contradict their nature. And besides these purushas and the pradhana Samkhya has not recognized any other ultimate entity which could be conceived to set the latter in motion. The original activity of the pradhana of Shmkhya, therefore, is utterly impossible and inexplicable. By itself it cannot begin to act, and there is none else to make it act.⁴

To illustrate the spontaneous modification of the Pradhana the Samkhya has also sought to cite the example of the changing of grass, etc., into milk. But Shankara has pointed out that grass changes into milk, only when it is eaten by a female mammal and not when it is left to itself or is eaten by a male animal. In other words, the changing of grass into milk, depending as it does on the activity of a sentient or conscious being, is not spontaneous in the strict sense.⁵ It is true that the female mammals do not make conscious efforts to change the grass eaten by them into milk. All the same it remains a fact that the milk is not a spontaneous modification of the grass. For, this modification or transformation is undoubtedly dependent upon at least the digestive heat and some sort of activity of the peculiarly formed living organisms of the female mammals.

On the one hand, the Samkhya has maintained that the activity of the pradhana is for the purpose of the individual souls or purushas,

1 SBS. II. 2. 2.

3 Vide SBS. II. 2. 3.

5 Vide SBS. II, 2. 5,

2 Ibid. II. 2. 3.

4 SBS. II. 2. 4,

while, on the other hand, it has also maintained that its activity is spontaneous and has no reference to anything whatsoever, meaning thereby that it requires no aiding principle (sahakari) to make its activity possible. But Shankara has rightly pointed out that reference to purpose is as much a reference as reference to an aiding principle is. However, if a distinction between these two types of reference is made, and it is considered worthwhile to hold that in spite of its not regarding any aiding principle the pradhana cannot do without regarding a purpose, the advocates of this view, Shankara says, can very well be asked to say as to what this purpose is. Is it the souls' enjoyment, or final release, or both? To say that it is the souls' enjoyment would mean to deny the possibility of their final release. For they being essentially inactive would not be able to effect it, while the pradhana by aiming at their enjoyments of various sorts, would always tend to keep them in bondage. Moreover, in view of the Samkhya-souls' essential nature it is unintelligible how enjoyment of any sort can belong to them. On the other hand, to maintain that souls' release is the purpose of the pradhana is to make its activity purposeless, for it is to forget that even before its activity begins they are already in the state of release. Likewise it cannot also be maintained that the souls' enjoyment and release both constitute the purpose of the pradhana. For the pradhana being capable of producing an infinite number of objects for their enjoyment the occasion for their final release would never arise. The souls being essentially pure in their nature and the pradhana, non-intelligent, they cannot, rightly speaking, feel any sort of desire. So, it would also be improper to speak of satisfaction of desire as being the purpose of the pradhana's activity. Can the Samkhya, then, justify its view of seeing purpose in the activity of its pradhana on the ground of rendering its creative power and the souls' inherent power of sight meaningful? Certainly not, Shankara would say. For, on making this assumption, the Samkhya would be driven to contradict its own conception of the souls' final release; for, the respective powers of the souls and the pradhana never parting with them, the existent world would never cease to exist, and this would make the souls' final release impossible.¹ As a matter of fact to ascribe purpose to the non-intelligent pradhana is self-contradictory. Unconscious teleology is inconceivable.

Sometimes, in order to explain the activity of the pradhana, the propounders of the Samkhya view of creation have taken recourse to citing either the instance of a lame man and a blind man or the instance

[Vide SBS. II. 2. 6.

of iron and magnet. But these are not really parallel instances. A lame person may manage to move a blind man by making use of words or other such means; but in the case of the soul which is altogether indifferent to action and of the nature of pure consciousness there is no room for any such means or devices to exist. To maintain that it moves the *pradhana* by virtue of its mere proximity to it, in the way the magnet moves the iron, would mean to grant permanency to the motion of the latter. For there being no such thing as could be conceived to interfere with this proximity, it would continue for ever, and so also would, the motion of the *pradhana*. But such a view of it would flatly contradict the *Samkhya* conception of dissolution and creation alike. Moreover, the instance of the magnet and iron, like the instance of blind and lame persons, is not a parallel one. For unlike the proximity of the *pradhana* and soul the proximity of the iron and magnet is not permanent, but is brought about through some activity extraneous to both of them. Thus, neither of the instances cited is appropriate and adequate enough to help the *Samkhya* out of the difficulty it is involved in. As there is no *tertium quid* to connect its indifferent and inactive *purushas* to its non-intelligent *pradhana*, a connection between them is inconceivable. And in case *Samkhya* made an attempt to connect them through their fitness to see and to be seen respectively, it would be obliged to cancel its conception of the former's final release, simply because their fitness being permanent their connection also would remain permanent.¹

The three constituent *gunas* of the *pradhana*, in its original condition, are in a state of perfect equilibrium. In other words, in that state all the *gunas* enjoy perfect independence and none of them is either inferior or superior to any of the other two. So absolute independence may rightly be said to constitute their essential nature.² Shankara therefore seems to be right when he urges that in the state of original equipoise the three "*gunas* cannot possibly enter into the relation of mutual suberviency because thereby they would forfeit their essential characteristic, viz., absolute independence. And as there exists no extraneous principle to stir up the *gunas*, the production of the great principle and the other effects—which would require for its operative cause a non-balanced state of the *gunas*—is impossible."³

Now, in order to avoid the difficulty referred to above, the *Samkhya* may maintain that the *gunas* are of unsteady nature and hence 'able to enter into the relation of mutual inequality, even while they are in a state

1 Vide SBS. II. 2. 7.

2 Ibid. II. 2, 8.

3 SBS. II. 2. 8. (Thibaut's Trans.)

of equipoise.' But in the opinion of Shankara even this modification in its view would not enable the Samkhya to defend itself against the other objections stated here. For example, unless it admits the first cause of the world to be an intelligent principle, it can never explain its orderly arrangement, etc.,¹ "Moreover, if the gunas were capable of entering into the relation of mutual inequality even while in the state of equipoise, one of two things would happen, they would either not be in the condition of inequality on account of the absence of an operative cause; or else, if they were in that condition, they would always remain in it; the absence of an operative cause being a non-changing circumstance."²

(c) Brahmakaranavada of Shankara

Whatever is of the nature of becoming is an effect, and whatever is an effect is not self-existent and self-explanatory. An effect must have a cause, and the cause must be not only necessary but also adequate to account for it. What is itself an effect cannot be an ultimate cause. The ultimate cause must itself not be an effect. It must be an uncaused cause, and, hence, not of the nature of becoming. Now, the world of our experience is undoubtedly of the nature of becoming. It is an effect. It must, therefore, have a cause. And its cause must be appropriate to it. The necessity of recognizing an uncaused cause of the world was rightly realized by the founders of both the Samkhya and Vaisheshika systems of philosophy; but they failed to conceive an adequate cause of it. The Samkhya pradhana and the Vaisheshika paramanus, apart from other difficulties involved in their conception as the ultimate cause of the world, can explain neither the orderly arrangement and harmony experienced in the world nor their own initial activity. The ultimate cause of this vast, wonderful and well-designed world must be, as Shankara has maintained, both intelligent and powerful enough to account for it. He has therefore rightly said that the omniscient and omnipotent Ishvara alone can be the ultimate cause of this world.³

The untenability of the earlier forms of the Samkhya and Vaisheshika systems of philosophy which did not recognize Ishvara or God even as the efficient cause of the world was later on duly realized by the followers of these very systems themselves. Accordingly, they began to hold Ishvara as the efficient cause of the world, but as efficient cause only. So far as its material cause is concerned they still stuck fast to holding as

1 Vide SBS. II. 2. 9.

2. Ibid. (Thibaut's Trans.)

3 SBS. II. 1. 22.

such their *pradhana* and *paramanus* respectively. But to Shankara *Ishvara* is both the efficient and material cause of the world. According to him to view *Ishvara* as its efficient cause only is to limit Him and thus to make Him non-eternal.¹ Moreover, if *Ishvara* be viewed as its efficient cause only, and *pradhana* or *paramanus* as its material cause, there arises the difficulty with regard to His action on them. Disembodied *Ishvara*, according to Shankara, cannot reasonably be conceived to be their mover (*pravartaka*).² It was in fact the consideration of the difficulty of interaction between mind and matter, the two entities of altogether different nature, which drove Spinoza to denounce Descartes' dualistic conception of reality and to propound in its place his own monistic doctrine of single substance. The question of action or interaction is, indeed, a genuine stumbling block to any philosophy which propounds two or more ultimate reals, exclusive and independent.

There are, however, some difficulties which Shankara's own view of *Ishvara* as being both the material and efficient cause of the world appears to be beset with. And these he himself seems to have visualized while trying to answer the objections which, as he thinks, are likely to be raised against his view by a supporter of *Samkhya* or *Vaisheshika* conception of creation. Let us briefly see what some of these objections are and how Shankara has tried to meet them.

Just as gold cannot be the cause of earthen jars and clay the cause of gold ornaments, so also, one might urge, *Brahma* or *Ishvara* cannot be the cause of the world, because the former being pure and of the nature of consciousness is altogether different from the latter which is impure and unconscious in its nature.³ But, according to Shankara, it is not necessary that the cause and effect must be of the same nature. And to illustrate this view he has cited the instance of unconscious hairs and nails originating from conscious beings and of conscious creatures like scorpions springing from unconscious matter, such as cow-dung. Of course, one might rejoin that the unconscious hairs and nails are produced from the unconscious bodies of men or other animals and that only unconscious bodies of scorpions are the effects of unconscious cow-dung. But even then, Shankara would say, there is an appreciable difference between the nature of the effects and the causes concerned: For, while the body of a scorpion, to take one instance only, has consciousness in it the cow-dung is altogether devoid of it. In fact, cause and effect cannot be exactly alike.

1 Vide SBS. II. 2. 41.

2 Ibid. II. 2. 40.

3 Vide SBS. II. I. 4.

The very fact that one is called cause and the other effect implies some sort of distinction between them. And in case it be pointed out that earthy nature is at least the one common quality of both the causes and effects under consideration here, Shankara would say that so is also existence (satta) a common character of Brahma and the world alike.¹

The conception of the relation of cause and effect between Brahma (Ishvara) and the world may also be objected to on the ground of the prior non-existence of the qualities of the latter in the former. As the latter is characterized by impurity, unconsciousness, and qualities like sound, etc., which do not exist in the former, so it may be urged that to accept a causal relation between them would mean to accept *asatkaryavada* which is unacceptable to Shankara himself. Shankara, however, has set this objection aside by maintaining that the non-existence of the effect, as such, in the cause does not mean that it does not pre-exist even in the form of its cause. According to him an effect never exists independently of and apart from its cause. As after its origination so also before it the effect exists only in and through the Self of the cause. So even before the origination or appearance of its peculiar qualities the effect can very well be said to be existent by the Self of its cause, and hence there is no occasion for accepting *asatkaryavada*.²

Further, the denial of the proposition that Ishvara is the cause of the world may also be attempted by urging that in case it is held to be true, it would follow that at the time of reabsorption of the latter into the former such qualities of the latter as grossness, compositeness, limitedness, and the like, defile the nature of the former. Secondly, it may also be opined that at the time of reabsorption of the world into Ishvara all distinctions of the former having ceased to exist there would remain no cause for their re-arousal. And in case the beginning of a new world is assumed even in the absence of adequate causes for its distinctions to arise, it would have to be admitted that even such souls as have attained final release would also reappear in the newly created world. On the other hand, if it is maintained that even at the time of its reabsorption the world retains its distinction from Ishvara, it would amount to a virtual denial of reabsorption itself.³ But in the opinion of Shankara all these objections are of no avail against his view. That the effect does not defile its cause by its nature not only when it returns to the latter but also when it exists in it with all its distinguishing characters has been shown by him

1 Vide SBS. II. 1. 6.

2 Ibid. II. 1. 7.

3 SBS. II. 1. 8.

by means of the instances of earthen jars and gold ornaments, etc., which do not impart to their causes, viz. clay and gold respectively, their special features either when they are reabsorbed into them or when they actually exist in and through them, while the reappearance of the world with its distinctions, after its reabsorption into its cause, has been explained on the analogy of a soul's attaining the condition of non-distinction in the states of deep sleep and trance and then returning to its former state of distinctions when the states of sleep and trance come to an end. And so far as the possibility of the released souls' return to the world is concerned, it has been denied by him on the ground of the annihilation of their wrong knowledge (which is the cause of one's rebirth) by true knowledge. The last objection is obviously based on the false assumption that even at the time of its reabsorption the world retains its distinction from its cause, so Shankara has rightly ruled it out.¹

As Ishvara, according to Shankara, is perfect and possessed of manifold wonderful powers, and creates the world according to the merits and demerits of the individual souls and out of his mere sportive nature, the conception of his being the cause of the world cannot be objected to also on the ground of his being without implements or motives to create, or by attributing partiality or its opposite to him.² There are, of course, a few other similar objections which Shankara has himself brought forth and discussed³; but we need not amplify our account of them any further. What has been said seems to be sufficient to make his position with regard to the creation of the world clear and to throw necessary light on certain points connected with his conception of causation in particular and constituting some of the landmarks of his Brahmanavada in general. And these points may briefly be stated as follows :—

In the first place, it may be said to be a definite opinion of Shankara that the world is neither an imaginary creation of an individual person's mind, nor an evolute of a non-intelligent causal matrix (prakriti), much less an effect of blind atoms, but the fruition of a conscious will-power of an omniscient and omnipotent world-spirit which requires no material, no implements, no aid, to create it. Secondly, the world as an effect is non-different from its cause, the saguna Brahma or Ishvara. It cannot exist apart from its cause. But its non-difference from its cause does not mean its identity with it. An effect such as a pot may not be different from its cause such as clay; but the cause is certainly different from any

1 Vide SBS. II. 1. 9.

2 Vide SBS. II. 1. 24, 25, 32, 33, 34.

3 See SBS. II. 1. 21-23, 26-28, 31, 35-36.

or all of its effects. The effects may appear or disappear, but the cause remains there. The effects therefore, though not-different from their cause, are not identical with it. The cause, though immanent in them all, transcends them all. It is therefore different from them. So the cause of the world is different from it. In other words, Ishvara, the cause and creator of the world, constitutes the Self of the world; but the world does not constitute His Self.¹ Accordingly, the nature of the world, good or bad, does not affect at all the essential nature of Ishvara, much the same as the impurities, or good qualities, of water have no effect whatsoever on its cause, the hydrogen-oxygen. Thirdly, from the way in which Shankara has tried to discredit the Samkhya and Vaisheshika views of Creation and to meet the objections against his own view of it, it is also quite evident that in his Brahmanavada reasoning occupies on no account an insignificant place.

Lastly, it can also be definitely said that in the opinion of Shankara it is Ishvara, or Brahma conceived as conditioned by mysterious maya in its unmixed aspect of sattva, and not Brahma in its essential indeterminate and unqualified transcendental nature of pure being, pure consciousness and pure bliss, that is the material and efficient cause (abhinnaimitto-padanakarana) of the world. It is, of course, true that his followers seem to disagree among themselves on this point. For instance, according to Sarvajnatmamuni, the author of Samkshepashariraka, pure Brahma itself is the material cause of the world², while the followers of the Vivarana school of thought hold Ishvara or Brahma as conditioned by maya as its material cause.³ According to the author of Padarthatattvanirnaya both Brahma and maya are the material cause of the world⁴, while according to Vachaspati Mishra Brahma itself is its material cause and maya is only an auxiliary.⁵ On the other hand, the author of Siddhantamuktavali has maintained that maya itself, and not Brahma, is the material cause

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- 1 Vide Ap., 135 (कार्ये कारणता याता कारणे न हि कार्यता);
SBS. II. 1. 9 (कार्यस्य कारणात्मकत्वं न तु कारणस्य कार्यात्मकत्वं)
 - 2 SLS. I. 17 (शुद्धं संक्षेपकमते); 1. 25 (ब्रह्मात्रमुपादानं); Samkshepashariraka
I. 545, 550, 553, 555.
 - 3 SLS. I. 18 (मायोपहितमीशं तदाहुर्विवरणानुगाः); (तस्मादनिर्वचनीयमायाविशिष्टं
कारणं ब्रह्म..... quoted from Vivarana by Pandita Mulashankara Vyasa in his
Trans. of SLS., p. 64).
 - 4 SLS., Parichchheda I. p. 74 (ब्रह्म माया चेत्युभयमुपादानं)
 - 5 Ibid. p. 79 (ब्रह्म स्वत एव.....उपादानं.....माया सहकारिमात्रम्)

of the world (mayashaktirevopadanam na Brahma).¹ In this way there are other divergent views also, so much so that some thinkers have even gone to the length of saying that one soul (jiva) alone by virtue of its imagining all things (including Ishvara) in itself, like the seer of a dream, is the cause of the entire world.² But so far as Shankara himself is concerned it can indubitably be said that it is Ishvara and none else that he regards as the material and efficient cause of the world. According to him the cause of the world is omniscient, omnipotent and possessed not only of infallible or true imagination but also of all other attributes which are necessary for being the cause of such a vast and well-designed world.³ And these attributes are appropriate to Ishvara only. Neither jiva, nor maya, nor even Brahma can rightly be held to be their possessor.

As we shall shortly see, jiva or the individual soul, according to Shankara, is possessed of only limited powers and is labouring under the influence of ignorance. Maya is unconscious or non-intelligent, and Brahma, as such, beyond all qualities, categories and characterization. None of them therefore fulfils the conditions which Shankara has deemed to be necessary for being the cause of the world. Ishvara alone fulfils them. So Ishvara, according to him, is both the material and efficient cause of the world.⁴ To say that Ishvara is the efficient and maya the material cause of it would not be proper. For, it would mean to create a clear but unwarranted chasm between them. Ishvara as Ishvara is inseparable from maya. Apart from it he cannot be conceived as an efficient cause of the world. Maya is only His power. It has no existence apart from Him. The conception of Ishvara implies the conception of maya as well. Moreover, the assertion that Ishvara is the efficient cause and maya, the material cause of the world would openly run counter to Shankara's own criticism of a similar view of the Shaivas and others.⁵

In his book 'The Vedanta of Shankara', Dr. R. P. Singh has dwelt upon the 'creative nature of Brahman',⁶ and has tried to advance a few arguments to justify his view that according to Shankara the Absolute Real, viz. Brahma itself, is the 'Creative Cause' of the world. Although in view of what we have already seen about Shankara's conception of

1 Ibid. p. 80.

2 Ibid. p. 73 (जीव एव स्वप्नद्रष्टृवत् स्वस्मिन्नीश्वरत्वादिसर्वकल्पकत्वेन सर्वकारणमित्यपि केचित्)

3 SBS. II. 1. 30, 37.

4 SBS. I. 4. 23.

5 Vide SBS. II. 2. 37-41. 6 Vide 'The Vedanta of Shankara', p. p. 316-319,

doctrine¹, while Vidyaranya, who regards the different forms of avidya as the limiting adjuncts of jivas, has favoured the latter view. The advocates of the former doctrine try to explain everything on the analogy of a dream. According to them the entire world, including the appearance of many jivas, is imagined through ignorance (ajnana) by one jiva only.² This is pure solipsism which fails to account for the difference between those souls which have been released from bondage and those which are yet in it. And as this difference has been recognized by the sages of the Upanishads themselves, the faithful followers of them have strongly disfavoured this doctrine of a single soul.³

Now, so far as Shankara himself is concerned it can definitely be said that he is a believer in the doctrine of many jivas. He has not only repeatedly spoken of their plurality and differences⁴, but has also argued out that in case only one soul (jiva) were admitted it would not be possible to distinguish between those individuals who desire the fruits of their actions and those who are aspirants after their liberation; for one and the same person cannot simultaneously be an aspirant after liberation as well as a seeker of the fruits of his actions.⁵ Moreover, the veracity of the view that Shankara believed in a plurality of jivas is also borne out by the fact of his recognition of a psychophysical organism, consisting of the body, sense-organs and the mind (manas), etc., as the limiting adjunct of a jiva. For the plurality of such limiting adjuncts, which is an undeniable fact, implies the plurality of the jivas as well. No doubt, from the ultimate or ontological point of view Shankara does not regard their plurality as being real. But that is a different thing. For, from that point of view the very question of the number of jivas does not arise, because on adopting that point of view there is no jiva at all. The existence of a jiva is an empirical fact, and so is, according to Shankara, the existence of many jivas. From the empirical point of view the plurality of jivas is as stern a fact with him as any other plurality or differences. One who has not only distinguished between Ishvara and jiva but has also recognized different forms of conscious living beings, both higher and lower than human beings, cannot but be a believer in many indivi-

1 Vide Siddhantamuktavali, p. p. 16-24.

2 Vide SLS., p. 121; Siddhantamuktavali, p. 18.

3 Vide SLS., p. p. 125-26.

4 Isha Up. I. 4; SBG. II. 12; IV. 10; IV. 11; SBS. I. 3. 15; II. 3. 43; SB. Prashna Up. I. 1-4, 10-16; SB. Katha Up. I. 2. 24; I. 3. 5-9, 12; II. 5. 5, 7; SB. Br. Up. I. 4. 10, and so on.

5 SBG. IV. 11 (न हि एकस्य मुमुक्षत्वं फलाशित्वं च युगपत् संभवति)

dual souls. Moreover, as we shall see in Chapter VI, Shankara has clearly distinguished between the contents of a dream and the objects of common experience. He cannot, therefore, subscribe to the view of ekajivavadins who regard everything including the plurality of jivas as the fictitious creation of a single soul's deluded mind exactly like the creation of the objects of a dream-state.

VI · Pratibimbavada and Avachchhedavada (The doctrine of reflection and the doctrine of limitation) :—

In order to explain the empirical relation between the individual soul and Brahma, or the difference between Ishvara and the individual souls, some followers of Shankara have taken recourse to the analogy of the sun's reflection in water contained in different receptacles of it; while others have exclusively employed the analogy of the limitation of ubiquitous space within a jar or other such objects. The former view is technically called the doctrine of reflection (pratibimbavada) and the latter, the doctrine of limitation (avachchhedavada). According to both the doctrines all the jivas are, in their essential nature, one and the same pure consciousness, still they appear to be different on account of the differences between their limiting adjuncts. Just as the pure or impure nature of water affects the sun's reflection only, and not the sun itself, so also it is the individual soul only, and not Brahma, the Pure Consciousness, which is affected by the good or bad qualities of the internal organ. Just as one and the same unaffected ubiquitous space appears to be different owing to its apparent limitation by a jar, etc., even so the same ultimate consciousness appears as different individual egos or souls on account of its being conditioned by different internal organs.

While the doctrine of reflection has found favour with the Vivarana school of thought, the doctrine of limitation has found its supporters in the followers of the Bhamati school. For instance, in Prakatarthavivarana Ishvara has been viewed as the reflection of the pure consciousness or Brahma in maya, while jiva, as the reflection of the same consciousness in its innumerable finite parts or points which have the power of concealment and distortion (avarana-vikshepashakti) and are called avidya.¹ According to the author of Samkshepashariraka Ishvara is the reflection of consciousness in avidya, and jiva, the reflection of it in the internal-organ (antahkarana).² But in the opinion of Vidyaranya, the author of Panchadashi, Ishvara is the reflection (of Brahma) in maya, and the

1 SLS., p. 82.

2 Ibid. p. 83.

known but for this basic principle of knowledge. Everything appears to be there because of it. Shankara therefore holds the entire world of our experience to be an appearance of this most fundamental and un-objectifiable objectless consciousness. But such a view of the world of our actual experience necessarily gives rise to the exigency of our conceiving an appropriate agency adequate to account for its appearance. And this agency, according to Shankara, is Ishvara which, though essentially the same as Brahma, is conceived as endowed with the most mysterious power called maya.

IV Ishvara and the individual souls (jivas) :

As we have seen in Chapter III, an individual soul in its essential nature is, according to Shankara, identical with Brahma, and so is also Ishvara, who has been held by him to be the creator and cause of the entire world. So, it would not be wrong if it is maintained that in respect of its true essence the individual soul is one with Ishvara. But their ultimate identity should not be allowed to make us close our eyes to the great difference between them which Shankara himself has tried to bring out and emphasize. Ishvara is eternally pure, enlightened and released.¹ His power and knowledge are unconcealed.² He is omniscient and omnipotent.³ There is no limit to his divine excellences.⁴ His nature consists in undiminishing knowledge and power.⁵ He is the Lord of all beings, beginning from Brahma and continuing upto the blades of grass.⁶ Maya does not obstruct his knowledge, because he is its wielder.⁷ He is the witness of all cognitions.⁸ Though free from all attachment, hatred, etc.,⁹ Ishvara is the benefactor of all sentient creatures.¹⁰ He is their inner ruler¹¹, and the distributor of the fruits of their actions to them.¹² He is the creator, preserver, and the destroyer of the entire universe.¹³ He is one. There cannot be two Ishvaras; for were it so, the (harmonious) working of the world could not be possible.¹⁴ Though connected with the world as its originator, ruler, etc., He is not at all of the world. He is perfectly free from all vices, miseries, and the like.¹⁵ Even a shadow of enjoyment or fruition cannot be conceived in Him.¹⁶ The jivas as such, on the other hand, are agents and enjoyers both,¹⁷ They acquire merit

1 SBG. IV. 5; SBS. I. 1. 22; SB. Isha Up. (नित्यमुक्त ईश्वरः); SBG. VII. 12.

2 SBG. IV. 5.

3 SBS. II. 1. 22.

4 SBG. X. 40.

5 Ibid. IV. 6.

6 SBG. IV. 6.

7 Ibid. VII. 25.

8 Ibid. V. 29.

9 SBG. VII. 13; XII. 2.

10 Ibid. V. 29.

11 Tattvopadesha, 19.

12 SBG. V. 29.

13 SBS. I. 1. 2.

14 SBG. XI. 43.

15 SBS. I. 2. 8.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid. I. 2, 8; I. 2. 11.

and demerit both, and (as a result of that) experience pleasure and pain, etc.¹ Their powers and knowledge are finite.² They are deluded by the effects of the (three) gunas (of prakriti) and are subject to attachment, hatred, etc.³ Although in its essential nature the individual soul is not different from the highest Self, all the same mortality and fear, which are the effects of ignorance, desire and work, are erroneously believed by it in itself.⁴

Thus, the worldly jiva is different from Ishvara.⁵ The former is an agent of worship (upasaka), and the latter, an object of it.⁶ The former is an obtainer, while the latter, an object to be obtained.⁷ The obtainer itself cannot be the object to be attained.⁸ It is not proper to speak of one and the same being both as an agent and object of one and the same action of movement.⁹ The one is thinker; and the other, an object of its thought¹⁰; the one, knower, and the other, the object of its knowledge.¹¹ Though both Ishvara and jiva are Brahma or universal Self in their essential or ontological nature, yet they are different due to the difference between their limiting adjuncts.¹² While the limiting adjuncts of Ishvara are eternal and unexcelled knowledge and power, the limiting adjuncts of the jivas are ignorance (avidya), desire (kama) and psychophysical organisms (lit. body and sense-organs) qualified by actions.¹³ As Vidyaranya, the author of Panchadashi, has rightly observed the limiting adjunct of Ishvara is maya, or prakriti as characterized by its pure sattva guna, while that of an individual soul is its avidya or ignorance which differs from soul to soul, and so accounts for their plurality.¹⁴

V Is Shankara an advocate of Ekajivavada or Anekajivavada ?

Among Shankara's followers some have propounded the doctrine of one soul (ekajivavada), while others are definite advocates of the doctrine of many individual souls (anekajivavada). For instance, Prakashananda, the author of-Siddhantamuktavali, has pleaded the cause of the former

1 Ibid. I. 2. 8.

2 SBG. IV. 5.

3 Ibid. VII. 13, 27.

4 SBS. I. 2. 17.

5 Ibid. I. 1. 16.

6 Ibid. I. 2. 4.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid. I. 1. 17.

9 Ibid. I. 2. 4.

10 Ibid. I. 2. 12.

11 Ibid. I. 3. 5.

12 SBS. I. 2. 20 (एकस्यैव तु भेदव्यवहार उपाधिकृतः)

13 SB. Br. Up. III. 8. 12; see also SBS. I. 3. 14 (मन उपाधिकश्च जीवः.....)

Ibid. I. 3. 18 (जीवो बुद्ध्याद्युपाधिपरिच्छेदाभिमानो.....)

Ibid. I. 2. 6 (पर एवात्मा देहेन्द्रियमनोबुद्ध्युपाधिभिः.....हारीरः)

14 Vide Panchadashi, I. 16, 17 (Ramakrishnakritavyakhyā).

appealing to reason than the conception of it in Brahma, the Pure Being, which has been repeatedly and unequivocally declared by Shankara himself to be absolutely non-active (nishkriya) and unrelated to the world or anything whatsoever (asamsargi, asanga, nishprapancha, etc.).¹

That Shankara has distinguished between Nirguna Brahma and Saguna Brahma or Ishvara and that when he has spoken of Brahma as being the cause of the world he has used the word 'Brahma' for Saguna Brahma or Ishvara, we have already seen in chapter III, and hence need not reiterate. It may, however, be recalled that from the ultimate point of view Shankara holds the self-existent and immutable Brahma alone to be real. The creation of the world therefore cannot be held by him to be real in the same sense. So when he speaks of it and traces it to Ishvara it is only from the empirical point of view. From the transcendental or ultimate point of view he regards the world as an appearance only, and not as a modified form or transformation of Brahma. And this brings us to the distinction between Vivartavada and Parinamavada.

III Parinamavada and Vivartavada

'The 'parinama' of a thing is that form of it which is different from its original or former form but has got the same sort of existence as that thing itself has. It is that changed state of a (material) cause which in respect of its properties can be placed on the same par with that cause. In other words, an effect which is non-different from its cause is called its parinama. On the other hand, the vivarta of a thing is that form of it the existence or reality of which is dissimilar to that of the thing concerned. It is that appearance of an underlying cause the characteristic features of which are different from those of its cause. In other words, a vivarta is that effect which even without its non-difference from its cause is inexplicable without it.'² A pot, for example, is a parinama of clay, while the apparent silver is only a vivarta of the mother of a pearl in which it appears. In the former case the existence or reality of the effect, viz. pot, is of the same nature as that of its cause, viz. clay, for both are empirically real. But in the latter case it is not so, for while the mother of pearl is empirically real the silver that appears in it is illusory only. Of course, the apparent silver cannot be explained without reference to its ground and support, the mother of pearl, all the same it cannot be denied that there is genuine difference between the nature of their existence.

Now, Shankara's Brahma, we may recall, is of the nature of pure consciousness and bliss, perfectly immutable and self-existent, and the

1 Vide Chap. III.

2 SLS., p. 58. 60.

like, while the world of our experience has none of these characters. No doubt, being of the nature of becoming the world, according to Shankara, has, and must have, Brahma or immutable Being itself for its ultimate ground and support, all the same its nature is definitely unlike that of the latter. Unlike Brahma, it is not ultimately or ontologically real. Though different from that of illusory percepts, its reality is empirical only. Accordingly Shankara regards the world only as an appearance (vivarta) of Brahma, and not as its actual transformation (parinama), As a matter of fact, it would be utterly improper to attribute transformation to what is absolutely immutable. Change, or transformation, or what is subject to it, cannot enter into the essential nature of the changeless. The world is of changing nature. It cannot rightly be viewed as a state or form of the changeless Brahma. Shankara, therefore, views it as 'something superimposed on Brahma¹, and not as an actual evolute or outgrowth of it. This is his view of the world from the higher or ultimate point of view, and it is what is called vivartavada. But, from the empirical point of view Shankara is an advocate of parinamavada also. And that it is so is quite evident from the fact that he regards the world as the transformation (parinama) of Ishvara's inseparable power called maya, sometimes spoken of as prakriti also:

As distinguished from the Samkhya view called parinamavada Shankara's view of creation of the world is generally regarded as vivartavada; but, truly speaking, at places Shankara is as much an advocate of parinamavada as any follower of the Samkhya can be. For instance, when he says that it is the (apara) prakriti (of Ishvara), constituted of three gunas, which, being directed towards the realization of the individual souls' enjoyments and final release, gets transformed into the form of all the effects, implements and objects (of the world) and takes the concrete forms of the body and sense-organs, etc.², his view of the evolution of the world can hardly be distinguished from the parinamavada of Samkhya except that the prakriti of which he speaks is not the independent prakriti of Samkhya, but an inseparable power or nature of Ishvara. Thus, we find that Shankara has advocated both Parinamavada and vivartavada. The world, according to him, is a transformation (parinama) of Ishvara's 'maya' but an appearance (vivarta) of Brahma. Brahma is pure consciousness. It is eternally itself. Consciousness as such can never be an object of knowledge. All the same it is the ultimate ground and support (adhishtana) of all knowledge and the known. Nothing could ever be

1 Vivekachuramani, 233, 238; Svatmaprakashika, 6. 2 SBG. XIII. (Intro.).

Brahma as such and of the Creator and Cause of the world there does not appear to be any ground for such a view, yet in view of the importance of Dr. Singh's contention it seems to be desirable to devote some space to its consideration and to see if we are justified in attributing creativity to Shankara's Brahma.

No doubt, Dr. Singh is right when he says that "according to Shankara the permanent alone can explain change, the immutable alone can render intelligible mutation"¹; but on the basis of this true proposition we are not justified to conclude that change or mutation or creative activity really belongs to the permanent or immutable, or to the nature of Brahma itself, for so to conclude would mean to deny the very existence of the permanent or immutable. And this Dr. Singh himself seems to admit when he says that "Shankara's Brahma, like Aristotle's God, is the first mover and itself immovable" or that "the real, without giving up its nature, gives rise to change."² But in case it is maintained that the immovable itself is the first mover, we have got to ask ourselves as to what it is which the immovable moves or in which the real gives rise to change. Of course, we cannot say that the immovable moves itself or that the real gives rise to change in itself, for that would mean open self-contradiction. Shall we then say that the immovable moves something other than itself or that the real gives rise to change in something else? Certainly we cannot say this also; for, according to Shankara, the Immovable or the Real is strictly one without a second. Is not, then, the assertion that 'the immovable is the first mover' or that 'the real gives rise to change' meaningless? 'Yes', we would have to say, unless we admit, like Shankara himself, two different points of view, one ultimate and real and the other empirical and unreal, and maintain that in itself Brahma is really immovable or uncreative but appears to be moving or creative from our empirical point of view only.³

But in case Brahma in itself is uncreative or unmoving and perfectly homogeneous, something has necessarily got to be posited in order to make the undeniable empirical diversity possible.⁴ 'What is then

1 The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 375.

2 Ibid. p. 376.

3 SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 7 (लेलायतीव, न तु परमार्थतश्चलनधर्मकं तदात्मज्योतिः);
SB. Isha. Up., 4, 5.

4 Compare Vivaranaprimeyasamgraha, Sutra II, Varnaka I, p. 681

(पूर्वरूपमपरित्यजतो ब्रह्मणो निर्विकारत्वाज्जगद्रूपेण विकरिष्यमाणं वस्त्वन्तरं
किंचिदङ्गोकार्यम्)

this diversity due to ?' Shankara has himself raised this question, and has answered it by maintaining that it is due to conditioning adjuncts (upadhis), and that Brahma thus conditioned by eternal and unexcelled knowledge and powers is called Ishvara.¹ Shankara has thus left no room at all for attributing any creativity to his Brahma as such. The creator or cause of the world, according to him, is definitely Ishvara or Saguna Brahma and not Nirguna Brahma or Brahma as such. In fact, the conception of Ishvara is as much a necessity of thought as is that of Brahma. If becoming or change cannot be explained without positing a perfectly immutable Being as the ultimate ground and support of it, it cannot also be explained without conceiving a Being-in-becoming as its originator or prime mover. Ishvara is thus, not a 'superfluity', as Dr. Singh has opined², but a necessary 'mediating principle between Brahma and the world', as Professor Radhakrishnan has rightly observed.³

It does not seem to be quite sound to urge that, the Immutable Brahma alone being the highest reality, it is not "necessary for us to search for a principle which should be capable of playing the role of a go-between between the really real and the visibly existent."⁴ For, if an explanation of change is ever sought in the changeless, the changeless has got to be conceived as being endowed with some such auxiliary power as is appropriate to change. And that is what Shankara has done in conceiving Ishvara as the cause of the world. The fact that Brahma is the highest reality does not preclude the necessity of positing Ishvara as the cause of the world much the same as it does not expunge the agency of a potter to make the existence of a pot possible. Nor does the conception of Ishvara interfere with the absoluteness or unity of Brahma in any way, for Ishvara is Brahma itself as conceived with the mysterious power called maya which is inseparable from Him. Of course, if Ishvara were viewed as a reality or being different from Brahma the conception of Him could be said to be 'an implicit' or explicit 'confession of the limited absoluteness of the absolute being'⁵, but in so far as it is Brahma itself that has been conceived as Ishvara, there is no room for attributing such a confession to one who entertains this conception. The conception of creativity in Ishvara which combines in Him the nature of the Ultimate Real as well as that of the empirical reality is certainly more

1 SB. Br. Up. III. 8. 12 (कस्तहि भेद एषां ? उपाधिकृत इति.....ब्रूमः.....

नित्यनिरतिशय-ज्ञानशक्त्युपाधिः आत्मा अन्तर्यामीश्वर उच्यते)

2 The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 375.

3 IP. Vol. II. p. 557.

4 The Vedanta of Shankara, p. 375.

5 'The Vedanta of Shankara', p. 375,

jivas, the reflections (of Brahma) in avidya.¹ On the other hand, there are others who have propounded the doctrine of limitation. According to them the jivas are not the reflections of Brahma, but Brahma itself as limited or conditioned by the internal organs, etc., while Ishvara is the Brahma as conditioned by Maya. In their opinion reflection in and of things without concrete forms (rupa) is not possible.² Accordingly, they regard the doctrine of reflection of the formless Brahma in the formless internal organ, and the like, as untenable, and point out that by reducing the jivas to mere reflections or images of Brahma it tends to deprive them of their essential reality.

Shankara, however, has given no indication as to which of these two doctrines he is inclined to favour. He has taken recourse to both of them. When he illustrates the relation of Brahma to the jivas with the help of the example of the sun's reflection in water he appears to be an advocate of the doctrine of reflection³; but when he tries to explain the same on the analogy of the limitation of ubiquitous space by jars, etc., he equally appears to be a propounder of the doctrine of limitation.⁴ This, however, does not mean that he does not know his mind and is vacillating between the two views concerned. The fact is that each of these two doctrines has got something to be said in favour of the analogy it employs. For instance, while the example of the limitation of space by jar, etc., serves the purpose of illustrating the identity of the individual soul with Brahma better, the example of sun's reflection in water is more suitable to illustrate the empirical facts of the individual soul's worldly nature, liberation and the like.⁵ Shankara, therefore, seems to have used both the illustrations with a purposeful intention, and not at random or owing to an indecisive mind. Anyway, the fact of his having recourse to both the analogies or illustrations can by no means be denied. So, neither the Bhamati school nor the Vivarana school of thought can justify its view concerned by attributing it to Shankara himself.

1 Panchadasbi, I. 16, 17.

2 SLS., p. 108 (रूपानुपहितप्रतिबिम्बो न युक्तः सुतरां नीरूपे)

3 SBG. XV. 7; SB. Isha Up., 4; SB. Prashna Up., IV. 8; IV. 9; SBS. II. 3. 50 (एष जीवः परस्यात्मनो जलसूर्यकादिवत् प्रतिपत्तव्यः); Tatvopadesha, 11; SB. Shvet. Up., V. 8.

4 SBS., I. 1. 5; I. 2. 6-7; I. 2. 20; I. 3. 7; II. 1. 13; II. 1. 14; II. 1. 22; II. 3. 17; SBG. XV. 7.

5 Vide Pandita Lalita Prasada Dabrala's Introduction to his Hindi translation of Vivaranaprameyasamgraha, p. 9.

VII The Jiva and the Sakshin

As defined in Vedantaparibhasha 'the jiva is the pure consciousness as qualified by the internal organ, while Sakshin, the same consciousness conceived as conditioned by it (the same internal organ).¹ In other words, 'a jiva is that entity which has the internal organ for its attribute (vishe-shana), while the sakshin is that which has it for its limiting condition (upadhi). And the difference between an attribute (visheshana) and limiting condition (upadhi) lies in the fact that while the former distinguishes the thing it qualifies (from other things) by being taken along with it the latter distinguishes the thing conditioned by it without being actually coupled with it. For example, the colour or form (rupa) of a jar constitutes its attribute, for it distinguishes the jar from other objects by forming a part and parcel of it, while the walls of an earcanal are the limiting condition of the space within it, for they distinguish it from other parts of the ubiquitous space even without entering into the constitution or make-up of that space.'² So also the internal organ, material as it is, being incapable of illuminating objects, is only a limiting condition (upadhi) of that consciousness which illumines them all.³ Thus, the sakshin is the pure consciousness itself appearing as the constant subject of an individual person's varied experiences, while the jiva is the unity of this consciousness or sakshin and the internal organ.

Shankara has recognized three states of the jiva—the waking state, the dream state and the state of deep sleep. In the waking state the jiva identifies itself with the gross body and sense-organs and is called Vishva, probably because in this state the jiva, through the sense-organs, is in contact with the external world (vishva). In the dream state the sense-organs cease to work; but the manas remains doing its work of constructing imaginary objects out of the impressions left on it during the waking state. The jiva of this state identifies itself with its subtle body and is called taijas (vital). The state of deep sleep (sushupti) is a state of no activity on the part of both the manas and the sense-organs. Here the internal organ of which manas is a function goes back to its substratum or source, the avidya, which is said to be the karanasharira of the jiva. In this state the jiva identifies itself with this karana-shrira and is called

1 Vedantaparibhasha, p. 46.

2 Vide Vedanta-paribhasha, p. 46-47;

3 Ibid. p. p. 47-48; SB: Br. Up. IV. 3. 7 (यथा चतन्यावभास्यं घटस्य, तथा प्रदीपस्यापि.....अविशिष्टं)

Prajna.¹ All these states are of the jiva, and not of the sakshin. The sakshin is their illuminator only.

Although it is the sakshin itself which, when taken in association with its limiting adjunct, the internal organ, is called jiva, yet the difference between the two is too clear to be overlooked. The word 'sakshin' means a seer, a spectator or looker-on.² It witnesses all objects and experiences, but is itself witnessed by none. It is the unobjectifiable permanent subject of all knowledge and shines forth by its own light. In the words of Prof. Hiriyanna, "...while the jiva may become the object of self-consciousness on account of the objective element it includes, it is wrong to speak of the sakshin as knowable, for it is the pure element of awareness in all knowing; and to assume that it is knowable would be to imply another knowing element—a process which leads to the fallacy of infinite regress. But the sakshin does not therefore remain unrealized, for being self-luminous, by its very nature, it does not require to be made known at all. Its presence is necessarily equivalent to its revelation and it is therefore never missed,"³ The sakshin neither acts nor enjoys. It is the pure self. The jiva, on the other hand, is the empirical self. It is both a doer (karta) and an enjoyer (bhokta).⁴

The merits and demerits and the bondage and liberation belong to the jiva and not to the sakshin. The sakshin being the unaffected element of pure consciousness as conditioned by the upadhi of the internal organ is, in fact, ever liberated. That is why Shankara regards liberation as an ever-established fact which is concealed from the jiva as such, and is only revealed when true knowledge dawns upon one's mind, and not as something to be achieved by means of any sort of action.⁵ However, when an individual soul or jiva gets liberated, the sakshihood of the sakshin also comes to an end. Both sakshihood and jiva-hood are thus empirical facts only. They do not exist in Brahma, the Ultimate Reality, which knows no distinctions, including the distinction of subject and object. But from the empirical point of view the recognition of distinction between the sakshin and jiva seems to serve a very important purpose. For the fact of self-consciousness which is so commonly experienced is not so satisfactorily explained by means of any other hypothesis as by

1 Vide SB. Mand. Karika, I. 2.

2 SB. Shvet. Up., VI. 11 (साक्षी.....प्रवृत्ता)

3 Outlines of Indian Phil., p. 343.

4 Vide SB. Shvet. Up. IV. 7, 6; SB. Prashna Up., III. 10; IV. 9; Laghuvakyavritti, 2; SBG. XV. 7.

5 SBS. I. 1. 4.

means of hypothesizing a distinction between the sakshin and the jiva. Self-consciousness means that one and the same self is both the subject and object of one and the same act of knowing. But the difference or opposition between the subject and object of knowledge is so fundamental that to hold this seems to be as erroneous as to say that the north pole is the south pole, or the south pole, the north pole. But on viewing the empirical self or jiva as a sort of synthesis of the sakshin, the subject or witness of all knowledge, and the internal organ, which is an objective element, the difficulty involved in the explanation of self-consciousness is considerably removed. For on this view one and the same self contains a subjective as well as an objective element in it.

VIII The size of the individual soul or jiva

As we have seen in chapter III, the individual self or jiva, according to Shankara, is ultimately identical with Brahma; and Brahma, according to him, is literally infinite and ubiquitous. So, it cannot be denied that in his opinion the jiva also must essentially be of the same nature, i. e., ubiquitous (vibhu). And the same truth, we may say, follows from Shankara's overt criticism of the Jain doctrine according to which the jivas are of medium or bodily size,¹ and of the view of those who have maintained that they are of atomic size.² But this should not be taken to mean that Shankara believes that jivas as such are of all-pervading nature. Neither Shankara has ever said this, nor does it follow from his criticism of the doctrines referred to here. As the advocates of the two doctrines he has criticized respectively believe that the jivas are of bodily and atomic size in their essential or ultimate nature, their criticism can only mean that Shankara who has criticized them believes the essential or ultimate nature of the jivas to be otherwise, and not that he regards the jivas, as such (i. e., in their empirical nature), to be ubiquitous.

According to Shankara, the jivas, as such, are neither the pure consciousness which is their true or ultimate essence, nor the internal organ which constitutes their limiting adjunct, but a sort of unity of the two. Whether we understand them on the analogy of the limitation of space within a jar, etc., or on the analogy of the sun's reflection in water, they cannot be conceived to be all-pervading. The space as such may be ubiquitous; but space within a jar is certainly not so. Similarly the sun may be very large; but its reflection in water is comparatively of a very small size. So also the pure consciousness, or Brahma, may be ubi-

1 SBS. II. 2. 34-36.

2 SBS. II. 3. 29.

quitous, but that element of it which has for its limiting adjunct the minute internal organ cannot be rightly said to be so. Just as the correct view of the space within a jar is to hold it to be of the size of the jar, even so the correct view of the size of jiva would be to regard it as being of the same size as its limiting adjunct, the internal organ, is. And as the internal organ, according to Shankara, is of very minute size, the jiva also must be held to be very minute.

While distinguishing between Ishvara and jiva Shankara has definitely maintained that unlike the existence of the latter the presence of the former is not confined to an individual person's organism only.¹ While Ishvara, according to him, is present both inside and outside the organisms, a jiva resides inside a particular organism only.² Now, what is confined to a finite organism cannot be ubiquitous. It is, therefore, quite clear that Shankara who has viewed an individual soul (jiva) as residing inside a finite organism only cannot view it, as such, to be all-pervading. The jivas, according to him, as we have already seen, are many. And as there cannot be many ubiquitous things of the same nature, Shankara, a great logician, must have conceived them to be otherwise, and not as being ubiquitous. Moreover, he is as staunch a believer in their transmigration as any other orthodox thinker is.³ But transmigration, or movement from one place to another, is not possible for an all-pervading being. So the jiva which is held to be subject to transmigration must be of finite size.

No doubt, it is true that Shankara does not agree with those who view the jiva as a part of Brahma or Ishvara, and has interpreted the word 'part' (amsha) occurring in the orthodox texts so as to mean 'a part, as it were' (amsha iva)⁴; but thereby he does not and cannot mean that it is, as such, ubiquitous. He cannot mean this, for so to maintain would go against what he has himself tried to maintain elsewhere, as when he has openly said that the jiva resides inside a particular organism only; and that he does not mean this is obvious from his own assertion itself. If his words 'a part, as it were' do not mean that it is really a part, they also do not mean that it is ubiquitous like Brahma or Ishvara. If what is truly identical with a thing cannot be spoken of as a part of it, it cannot also be said to be 'a part, as it were.' If the jiva as jiva were taken

1 SBS., I. 2. 3 (न तु शरीर एव भवति)

2 Ibid. (जीवस्तु शरीर एव भवति)

3 SB. Br. Up. IV. 4. 6; IV. 4. 10, 11; SB. Chh. Up., V. 10. 7; SB. Isha Up. 3.

4 SBS., II. 3. 43 (अंश इवांशः); SBG. XV. 7.

to be ubiquitous like Brahma, though against its very nature as such and contrary to all available evidence in Shankara's works, the words 'a part, as it were' would lose all their significance, which, truly speaking, consists in recognizing the empirical difference of the jiva from Brahma. And as this difference is due to the limiting adjunct called antahkarana which is of minute size, and as the jivahood of a jiva is conditioned by it, the jiva in its empirical nature must be conceived to be very minute likewise. This is the view of the sage of Shvetashvatara Upanishad, and the same seems to be the view of Shankara as well. According to both the jiva as such (i. e., as empirically viewed) is very minute; but essentially, or in its ultimate nature, it is infinite. Divide the front part of a hair, says the sage, into a hundred parts and then imagine one of these parts as divided into a hundred parts again, and the part thus conceived should then be deemed to be the size of the jiva, which is (also) infinite (or capable of becoming infinite)¹. Shankara also has said exactly the same thing in his commentary on the verse concerned, adding, of course, this remark only that the minute size of the jiva is relative to its subtle body (sukshma sharira) which is very minute. The jiva as jiva, he has maintained, is of minute size; but in its essence it is infinite.²

IX The nature of the jivas' knowledge :

In Vedantaparibhasha knowledge in the right sense has been defined as that which has for its object something which is not (already) known and subject to contradiction (anadhitagatabadhitavishayajnanatvam): This definition distinguishes knowledge from illusory perception as well as from remembrance. Remembrance is not knowledge because it pertains to something already known. An illusory perception is not knowledge because its object is subject to contradiction.

Likewise, Shankara has also distinguished knowledge not only from remembrance and illusory perceptions, but also from opinion and action alike. According to him knowledge is dependent on the thing known, and not on the (physical or mental) activity of the person who knows (vastutantra na tu purushavyaparatantra).³ Unlike actions, physical or mental, it does not create or make things, but manifests them.⁴ The things that are known are already there. Knowledge simply reveals them.

1 Shvet. Up. V. 9.

2 SB. Shvet. Up., V. 9 (...स च जीवस्वरूपेण, आनन्त्याय कल्पते स्थितः)

3 SBS. I. 1. 4; I. 1. 1; I. 1. 2; SB. Br. Up. IV. 5. 15 (ज्ञानं तु वस्तुतन्मन्वात्.....)

4 SBS. I. 1. 4.

Knowledge may involve an activity of one's mind; but it is not that activity itself. An activity is a process. Knowledge is not a process, but the culmination or fruition of a mental process. There is room for choice or option in an action or activity. It may or may not be undertaken.¹ But knowledge is not a matter of choice. If the object is there, and if the proper means of knowing it are operative, knowledge is also bound to be there. To close one's eyes to the facts around, or to refuse to know them, is to make a choice with regard to the activity of knowing, and not with regard to their knowledge as such. There cannot be two knowledges of one and the same thing. There may be two opinions about it. But opinion is not knowledge. Knowledge is dependent on the thing known, while opinion is largely dependent on the person opining.² Consequently, while opinions may differ, knowledge knows no difference. It is one or of one form only.³ Just as the fact of its dependence on the object or objects known distinguishes knowledge from action and opinion, so also it distinguishes it (knowledge) from remembrance which is not directly dependent on the presence of the fact remembered.⁴ Unlike knowledge remembrance does not manifest facts, for what is remembered is that which has already been known or manifested. Similarly the 'ekarupata' (oneness of form) of knowledge distinguishes it as much from illusory appearances and doubt as from opinion. For, while an illusory appearance is annulled by a subsequent right perception, multiformity is immanent in the very nature of doubt. So, Shankara has rightly maintained that "to think with regard to a post, 'this is a post or a man, or some, thing else', is not knowledge of truth....."⁵

Then, Shankara has distinguished knowledge from the objects known as well as from their knower.⁶ As a thing cannot be the object of its own activity⁷, the object known is different from knowledge or the act of knowing it, simply because the former is an object of the latter. So also knowledge in the sense of ideas about the things known is different from

1 Ibid. p. 18.

2 Vide SBS. I. 1. 2 (विकल्पनास्तु पुरुषबुद्ध्यपेक्षा)

3 SBS. II. 1. 11 (एकरूपं वस्तुतन्त्रत्वात्)

4 SBS. II. 2. 29.

5 SBS. I. 1. 2 (न हि स्थाणावेकस्मिन्स्थाणुर्वा पुरुषोऽन्यः वेति तत्त्वज्ञानं भवति)

6 SBS. II. 2. 28 (तस्मादर्थज्ञानयोर्भेदः)

1bid. I. 1. 4 (वेद्यवेदितुवेदनाभेदः)

7 Vide SBS. II. 2. 28.

their knower, for in the absence of a knower or intelligent principle these ideas cannot be rendered manifest, much the same as thousands of lamps burning inside a mass of hard rocks cannot manifest themselves.¹ The ideas which constitute our knowledge of things are manifold. They originate and pass away. So an enduring intelligent principle or knower, Shankara believes, is necessarily required to connect them and thus to give them the form of knowledge.² But this distinction, between the knower and known, according to him, holds good of empirical knowledge only. In perfect knowledge or integral experience (samyagdarashana), i. e., in the anubhava of the Ultimate Reality or Brahma, it does not exist. Brahma is devoid of all distinctions, including the distinction between the knowledge, knower and known.³ The knowledge of Brahma is the being of Brahma. It is not known by becoming an object of knowledge. But, the knowledge of Brahma or universal Self apart, which is the very foundational principle of all knowledge, all other knowledge involves both the knower and the known,

X The means or sources of knowledge : the Pramanas :

Pratyaksha (perception), anumana (inference), shabda, agama or shastra (scriptural testimony), Upamana (comparison), arthapatti (presumption) and anupalabdhi (non-apprehension) are the various sources of valid knowledge recognized by Shankara.⁴ But, mainly, he has had recourse to the first three of them which are, as a matter of fact, the pramanas or sources of knowledge that have been recognized by most of the systems of Indian Philosophy. So, in view of it and of our limited requirements, we shall confine our attention to their account only.

(a) Perception—Although Shankara has not given a systematic and separate account of perception and other means of knowledge, all the same something of it may conveniently be gleaned from his casual and stray remarks bearing on them. In Tarkasamgraha perception (pratyaksha) has been defined as that cognition or knowledge which arises from the contact of sense-organs and their objects (Indriyarthasannikarshajanyam

1 Ibid.

2 Vide SBS. II. 2. 28.

3 SB. Mand. Karika, IV. 1 (ज्ञानज्ञेयज्ञातृभेदरहितं परमार्थतत्त्वदर्शनं.....)

4 SBS. II. 1. 11 (प्रत्यक्षमनुमानं च शास्त्रं च.....);

SB. Mund. Up. I. 2. 12 (प्रत्यक्षानुमानोपमानागमैः);

SBG. XVIII. 66; SB. Br. Up. III. 3. 1 (प्रत्यक्षं.....अनुमानं.....अर्थापत्तिः);

SBS. II. 1. 18 (अनुपलब्धिः.....)

jnanam pratyaksham); and Shankara, it seems, endorses such a definition of perception when he similarly speaks of the contact of the sense-organs with their objects, such as sound, etc.¹ In every act of perception, he says, an external object is always present², which distinguishes it from remembrance in which there is no actual contact with an external object.³ Shankara's assertion that Brahma cannot be perceived because it lacks form, etc.,⁴ implies that the possession of qualities like form, and the like, is essential for an object in order to be perceived. The sense-organs, according to him, are possessed of the power of manifesting their different objects.⁵ They are the instruments or means of perception.⁶ It is through the instrumentality of the sense-organs and the manas that the objects of the world come to be known.⁷

As to the manas being a sense-organ there is no unanimity of opinion among Indian thinkers. In the words of Dr. Sinha "The Nyaya-Vaisheshika writers generally regard the manas as the internal organ, through which we perceive pleasure and pain. The Mimasakas also recognize the manas as the inner organ. The Samkhya also regards the manas as an internal sense-organ"⁸, while the Jains, and some of the Vedantins also, do not favour the view of regarding it as such⁹. Shankara, however, seems to have no objection to viewing manas also as a sense-organ¹⁰, although at places he has spoken of ten sense-organs only. The manas, it is believed, follows (or accompanies) the sense-organs proceeding to their respective objects¹¹, and it is through the modifications of this manas that the individual soul gets connected with the various external objects¹² and apprehends them. Thus, the manas (mind) is viewed as something distinct from the well-known external-organs. Prof. Max Muller's observation, therefore, that 'Shankara as a true monist would himself stand up

1 SBG. II. 14 (मात्राणाम् शब्दादिभिः संयोगः)

2 SBS. II. 2. 28 (उपलभ्यते हि प्रतिप्रत्ययं बाह्योऽर्थः)

3 SBS. II. 2. 29 (स्मृतिः.....अर्थ-विप्रयोगसंप्रयोगात्मकम्)

4 Ibid. II. 1. 11 (रूपाद्यभावाद्धि नायमर्थः प्रत्यक्षगोचरः)

5 SB. Kena Up. I. 2 (स्वविषयव्यञ्जनसामर्थ्यम्)

6 SBG. II. 14 (मात्रा आभिः मीयन्ते शब्दादयः); Tattvopadesha, 4.

7 SB. Kena Up. I. 3 (इन्द्रियमनोभ्यां हि वस्तुनो विज्ञानं)

8 IPS. P., p. 16.

9 Vide IPS. P., p. 17.

10 SBS. II. 4. 17 (मनोऽपीन्द्रियत्वेन श्रोत्रादिवत् संगृह्यते)

11 SBG. II. 67 (स्वस्वविषयेषु प्रवर्तमानानां.....मनः अनुप्रवर्तते)

12 Vide SBS. I. 1. 9.

for the oneness of the mind and its ten organs¹, does not seem to be faithful to Shankara's view of it. It is true that from the ultimate point of view Shankara stands up for the oneness of all things, nothing to say of mind and the ten organs only; but from the empirical point of view the distinction between them seems to be as well retained as the distinction between all other things. It is true that the function of manas is a common feature of the activities of all the other senses,² but on this account alone it cannot be viewed as one with them. Concomitance is not identity.

Of course, the manas is sometimes spoken of in the sense of manas and intellect (buddhi) combined.³ This is its comprehensive sense. In it it is identified with the internal organ (antahkarana) of which it is a sort of function only. In the restricted or narrow sense distinction has, however, been made between it and the intellect. In the wider or comprehensive sense all psychic states such as desire, imagination, vacillation, doubt, faith and its reverse, pre-severance and its opposite, bashfulness, understanding, fear, and the like, are attributed to it⁴; but when it is taken in its restricted sense only imagination and vacillation (vikalpa) are said to constitute its self⁵, while intellect is viewed as having decision for its nature.⁶ As all the mental states belong to the internal organ itself, their cognition does not require the mediation of the external sense-organs. Nor do they always directly depend upon the external objects, much the same as dream-experiences do not.⁷

Neither the manas nor the external sense-organs are by themselves capable of manifesting their objects. Their manifestation, in the last resort, belongs to the self-luminous inner consciousness. The power of the auditory sense-organ to make a person hear, or the power of the visual sense-organ to enable one to see, is, for instance, really derived from the inner Self, without which even the internal-organ cannot perform its functions of imagining and willing, etc. (samkalpadhyavasayadi).⁸ The inner luminosity or consciousness, which, as we have seen, constitutes the essential nature of every person, is indispensable for cognition.⁹ Like

1 TLVP., p. 97.

2 SB. Kena Up. I. 6 (मनः सर्वकरणसाधारणं ...)

3 Ibid. (मन इति बुद्धिमनसोरेकत्वेन गृह्यते)

4 Ibid. (कामः.....सर्वं मन एव)

5 SBG. X. 22 (संकल्पविकल्पात्मकं मनः)

6 Ibid. III. 42 (बुद्धिः निश्चयात्मिका)

7 Vide SBS. II. 2. 29.

8 Vide SB. Kena Up. I. 2.

9 SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 7.

the objects perceived the sense-organs including the manas are jada or bhautika (unconscious or material). By themselves they can perceive nothing. It is the jiva or individual soul which perceives. The sense-organs, whether internal or external, are only its instruments of perception. They serve its purpose. They cannot be said to serve their own purposes. They are aggregates like houses, etc. So there must be some being which is not itself an aggregate like them and whose purpose they serve.¹ Thus, in the perception of an external object there are four factors—the object itself, the external sense-organs, the manas or the internal organ and the perceiver, viz., the individual soul, while in the case of the perception of a mental state the last two factors only are involved. The modification of the internal organ is thus as essential as the presence of the jiva for both the external and the internal perception. This modification is technically called a vritti. While explaining the perception of external objects it has been stated in Vedantaparibhasha that ‘as the water of a pond getting out of it through a hole and entering the fields by means of a channel assumes the quadrilateral and other forms similar to those of the fields or beds it enters, even so the vital internal organ getting out through the visual sense-organ, etc., goes to the space of the objects, such as pots and the like, and gets modified into the (different) forms of those objects.’² As the internal organ is of a very super-fine nature its modifications (vrittis) reflect the element of consciousness present in them. And this gives rise to the perception of the objects concerned.

With regard to this theory of perception Professor Radhakrishnan has remarked that it “is rather crude on the scientific side, though its metaphysical insight is valuable.”³ As he has put it, “The whole question of the internal organ and its modifications which take the form of the objects is dealt with in a dogmatic way. There is no reference to the place and significance of images which, together with sense-presentations, constitute the percept. Primitive consciousness is not a duality but one mass of sentiency, and all knowledge grows by dissociation within it. The merit of this theory of perception, as of the Samkhya, is its open admission of the impossibility of reducing consciousness to a mere material change. Consciousness must be assumed as the primal fact, and not explained in terms of non-conscious factors.”⁴

1 SB. Kena Up. I. 2 (श्रोत्रादीनामेव तु संहतनम् .. परार्थत्वादवगम्यते प्रयोक्ता)

2 Vedantaparibhasha, p. 23.

3 IP. Vol. II, p: p. 492-93.

4 IP. Vol. II. p. 493.

No doubt, it cannot be denied that this theory of perception does not describe the process of perception completely or even adequately. "The Vedantins only say that the object stimulates the sense-organ and that the antahkarana flows out through the eye towards the object. They do not describe how, for example, in visual perception the rays of light enter the eye and what changes they undergo there and how they awaken the central energy and how the central energy moves out towards the object,"¹ But similar seems to be the case with the theory of perception propounded by the modern psychologists. Confining our attention to visual perception alone, we may easily point out that the modern psychological account of it is as inadequate as the one under consideration here. It leaves a wide gap between the actual perception of an object outside and the physiological process in the visual area of the brain. It is neither in the visual area or occipital cortex nor upon the screen of retina that an object is actually perceived. We perceive it there outside. Perception is undoubtedly a mental act, and not a mere physical or physiological process. Besides other mental activities, such as assimilating and discriminating, the activity of projecting is also essentially involved in it. The modern psychological account of it, therefore, is obviously an incomplete picture of it; for it misses the link between the actual perception of an object outside and the physiological changes occurring in the brain as a result of the so-called nervous energy flowing into it. Moreover, the fact that though the image of an object formed on the retina is an inverted image yet we see not an inverted object but an erect one shows that the mere physiological account of perception is only half the truth. "In order to complete the account of perception", as says Mr. Rao, "we shall have to say that when the central energy in the occipital cortex is awakened, it streams forth to that portion of the retina which has been stimulated and through it and through the lens to the object outside, along the path of rays of light which entered the eye. Thus the antahkarana does not see the inverted image which is only a means through which the antahkarana reaches out to the object, and in reaching out it has to pass through the lens and the inversion is corrected, and the path of the rays of light determines the direction and shape it should assume in relation to the object. This assumption not only explains the fact that we see things as erect and not as inverted, but also the fact that we see things as outside of us."²

Thus Shankara's view of perception as explained and elaborated by

1 PQ. Vol. XVI. No. III, October, 1940, p. p. 187-88. (Article by G. Hanumantha Rao).

2 PQ., October, 1940. p. 189.

the author of Vedantaparibhasha may conveniently be calculated to supplement the modern psychological account of it. As the important fact that perception results from sense-object-contact is equally acceptable to both the views, they do not seem to be incompatible with each other. Each, however, needs to be supplemented by the other.

(b) Anumana (inference)—Another means or source of knowledge which Shankara has recognized and widely employed is anumana. Literally the word 'anumana' means knowing after (anu - after, mana - knowledge). It is knowing something on the basis of something already known. In the words of Dr. B. N. Seal "Anumana (inference) is the process of ascertaining, not by perception or direct observation, but through the instrumentality or medium of a mark, that a thing possesses a certain character."¹ According to the Naiyayikas there are five propositions in pararthanumana (inference for others or demonstrative syllogism). They are pratijna, hetu, udaharana, upanaya and nigamana, and are called the five avayavas or constituent members of it. A 'pararthanumana', in its fullfledged form, may be expressed thus : (1) The mountain is fiery (pratijna). (2) Because it is smoky (hetu). (3) Whatever is smoky is fiery, as it is seen in the kitchen (udaharana). (4) The mountain is smoky (upanaya). (5) Therefore, it is fiery (nigamana).

Now, Shankara also has recognized this form of anumana with all its five members, and does not seem to agree 'with the Mimamsa in advocating the three membered syllogism'.² And as an instance of it we may take the following syllogism from his commentary on the Mandukya Karika (II. 4), where he says : (1) 'The objects of waking experience are unreal - this is pratijna. (2) Because they are seen or known - this is hetu. (3) Like the objects experienced or seen in a dream - this is example. (4) Just as the unreal objects of a dream are seen, so also being known or seen is a character of the objects of waking life - this is hetupanaya. (5) Therefore the objects of the waking experience are also unreal - this is nigamana.' Here is thus a clear evidence not only of Shankara's recognition of anumana as a means of knowledge but also of his recognizing all the five members or avayavas of it. Of course, while employing it he does not always specify all the five avayavas. But this is not tantamount to not recognizing them. In practical use a syllogism or inference is generally stated in the form of an enthymeme, and not in its full-fledged form, no

1 The positive Science of the Ancient Hindus, p. 250.

2 AHIP., Vol. II. p. 566.

matter whether one recognizes five or three constituent propositions (avayavas) of it.

An anumana or syllogism is ultimately based on perception. Its medium or instrumentality is what is called its 'linga' or 'hetupada' (mark or middle term), and there is in it a passage from the known to the unknown. And all these characteristics of it have been duly recognized by Shankara.¹ Of course, Shankara has not discussed the psychology of perception and inference adequately and systematically; but in view of what we have seen here with regard to his notions of them it is not proper to say, as Prof. Radhakrishnan has done, that "we are not able to state his views"² about them. As in the case of perception so also in the case of inference his views are more or less the same as those propounded in the Vedantaparihasha. There may be some difference in respect of minor points and minute details, but so far as their general nature is concerned there does not appear to be vital difference between them.

Now, so far as the value and efficacy of anumana are concerned it may be safely added that Shankara has duly recognized them; and the very fact that his works abound in its actual application is a clear and standing proof of it. He has repeatedly spoken of anumana as a means of valid knowledge. Nothing to say of the recognition of its value for practical life and empirical knowledge³, its value as a means of even the knowledge of our true Self or Brahma has been recognized by him. For instance, in his commentary on Bhagavadgita he has emphatically asserted that 'in view of the presence of agama (scriptures) and anumana it is rather bold to say that knowledge of Brahma or universal Self does not arise.'⁴ But he would not press the claims of anumana beyond its proper limits. On the other hand, he would openly say that in matters transcendental anumana by itself is not conclusive. There it should be subordinated to the authority of the scriptures. An anumana, he has rightly maintained, forfeits its claim to be a means of knowledge in case it contradicts perception or direct experience.⁵

1 Vide SB. Br. Up. I. 2. 1 (त्रयक्षपूर्वकत्वादननुमानस्य)

SBS. II. 1. 6, 11 (लिङ्गाद्यभावाच्च);

II. 1. 4 (दृष्टसाम्येनादृष्टमर्थ)

2 IP., Vol. II. p. 488.

3 Vide SBS. II. 1. 11.

4 SBG. II. 21 (तदधिगमायाऽनुमाने आगमे च सति ज्ञानं नोपपद्यते इति साहसमेतत्)

5 SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 6 (प्रत्यक्षविरोधे अनुमानस्याप्रामाण्यात्)

II. 1. 20 (न चानुमानं लभते)

(c) Shabda or Agama pramana (scriptural testimony)

Unlike other animals man learns not only from his own experience but from the experience of others as well. Our knowledge would have been decidedly far the poorer, if we were to acquire it exclusively through our own perceptual and inferential efforts. Other knowledge apart, an overwhelmingly larger portion of our historical and geographical knowledge is not a product of our personal perception. Nor has it all been acquired by us by means of inference. In matters pertaining to the remote past as well as to the unperceived present we have mostly to rely upon the testimony of others. Of course, these testimonies may conflict with each other and we may consequently have an occasion to doubt them. But then the only right alternative open to us is to verify them through an actual experience of our own, which is, truly speaking, not always possible. In order to be perceived an object should not only be fit to be perceived but should also be actually present before our senses. But the past, to take one instance only, which is dead and gone for ever, can by no means be made present. We may or may not believe the statements of those persons to whom it was not past but present, that is a different thing; but so far as its perception by us is concerned, it is impossible. So, in such cases reliance on the words of others is the only course before us. And in case we have no reason to doubt the reliability of the persons concerned, it is certainly to our advantage if we pin our faith to them and seek enlightenment through their words. Anyway, it cannot be denied that Shankara started his philosophical career with an initial faith in the authority of the Vedic scriptures with the help of which he sought and finally acquired indubitable knowledge about the nature of Brahma, the Absolute and the Ultimate Reality. So, what was, to begin with, only an object of faith naturally came to be regarded by him as a definite source of valid knowledge.

Accordingly, Shankara has boldly asserted that the para or super-sensible reality can be known only through the scriptures (agama), and not through sensuous perception and other means of knowledge.¹ The Brahma, he goes on to say, should be known through the traditional instructions of the Vedic teachers.² That Brahma is the cause of the origin, etc., of the world is known from the scriptures only.³ "The authoritativeness of the Veda with regard to the matters stated by it is

1 SB. Kena Up. I. 4 (प्रत्यक्षादिभिः प्रमाणैर्न परः प्रत्याययितुं शक्यः, आगमेन तु शक्यते एव प्रत्याययितुम्)

2 SB. Kena Up. I. 4 (ब्रह्म आचार्योपदेशपरम्परयैवाधिगन्तव्यं)

3 SBS. I. 1. 3.

independent and direct, just as the light of the sun is the direct means of our knowledge of form and colour.'¹ It cannot be assumed that there are some persons who are capable of perceiving supersensuous things without the aid of Shruti, for there is no efficient cause for such perception.² The knowledge of the ultimate reality can be acquired through the statements of the upanishads only.³ The true knowledge of what is supersensuous originates from shabda only.⁴ The Brahma is known from the scriptural source.⁵ The Vedic texts are the means of ultimate knowledge.⁶ There are in Shankara's works so many such utterances about scriptural authority, but we need not multiply them.

What needs to be clearly borne in mind in this connection is the fact that recourse is had to scriptural authority only with regard to the knowledge of transcendental or supersensuous matters. So far as the knowledge of sensible things and other worldly matters is concerned, Shankara never refers to scriptures. Moreover, even in respect of the knowledge of Brahma or Universal Self he does not rest contented with learning only what scriptures say about it. Mere indirect (paroksha) knowledge acquired through them is not enough for him. He seeks its verification through his own direct experience (anubhava) of the ultimate nature of his true Self, and, having clearly realized it, recommends the same course of action to others. In his opinion it is only that knowledge of Brahma which culminates in one's own direct experience (anubhava) of it that can result in one's final release from bondage.⁷ Accordingly he has strongly disparaged the bare verbal knowledge of Brahma.⁸ The fact that Shankara is not a blind follower of the scriptures we have already seen in chapter II, and hence need not dwell upon it again.

XI The superiority of Shabda-pramana (scriptural testimony) over other pramanas

Despite the fact that Shankara has recognized common perception, inference, etc., as means of our knowledge of the world he has undoubte-

1 Ibid. II. 1. 1 (Thibaut's Trans.)

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. II. 1. 3.

4 Ibid. II. 1. 27 (शब्दमूल एवातीन्द्रियार्थयाथात्म्याधिगमः)

5 Ibid. I. 1. 4 (ब्रह्म शास्त्रप्रमाणकम्)

6 SBG. II. 18 (शास्त्रं.....अन्त्यं प्रमाणम्)

7 Vide SBS. II. 1. 4 (अनुभववाचसानं च ब्रह्मविज्ञानं.....मोक्षसाधनं...)

IV. 1. 2 (सर्वदुःखविनिर्मुक्तं.....आत्मानुभवः)

8 Vide AP., 133.

dly attached greater importance to the authority of the Vedic scriptures than that which he has assigned to any other means. That perception or actual experience is more reliable than inference, etc., cannot be questioned. Although perception, like inference, may also be erroneous, yet it cannot be denied that inference and other means of knowledge depend upon it, not only in respect of obtaining their premises or matter ultimately from or on the basis of it, but for the verification of their validity as well. The priority and ultimacy of perception or actual experience as a means of knowledge is an undeniable fact of common recognition. And once it is admitted one has also got to admit that the more direct and clear an experience is the more reliable it must be. Why is our perception of external objects sometimes erroneous ? Is it not because our senseorgans, which function as mediating means between us, the perceivers, and the objects perceived, are, for some reason or the other, liable to err ? Would not then a direct experience of reality, if it were ever possible, without involving the mediation of the sense-organs, be more reliable and authoritative than one which involves such mediation ?

Now, the Vedic scriptures, Shankara believes, are such monumental works as contain the most direct and, hence, infallible experiences of the sages. It is therefore not at all surprising if he regards them as being more reliable than even perception, nothing to say of inference and other means of knowledge which are inferior to perception itself.

The powers of the sense-organs which are our implements or instruments of sense-perception are in many ways limited. As it has been nicely expressed in the Katha Upanishad, they have been so formed by their self-existent Lord that they can move outward only. They can grasp external objects alone, and not the inner Self.¹ Even in the case of external things they enable us to have the knowledge of their outward appearances or superficial nature only: they cannot enable us to peep deep into their inner or essential nature. Moreover, whatever knowledge we acquire with their aid is of finite nature or about particular facts only. For universal and inner knowledge of things we have to look to our intellect, or reason, or insight, invariably. Apart from it, such knowledge as pertains to vice and virtue and right and wrong does not lie within their power to procure for us. For such knowledge also we have to tap at the doors of other sources of knowledge. No doubt, in such matters our reason or intellect is of great help to us. But in matters transcendental reason or intellect too cannot

1 Katha Up., II. 4. 1,

take us a long way and to a decisive conclusion.² Varied are indeed the guesses that human beings have, from time to time, made about the ultimate real or reals. There is hardly any hard-thought out argument about the nature of ultimate reality which has not been found fault with by some or the other thinker of eminence. If some have argued for the existence of God, others have advanced arguments to prove that there is no God. Divergent are the views about the origin and destiny of the world, and they have all been equally supported by reason itself. Leave other things apart, thinkers have not yet come to an agreement about the true nature of their self even. Shankara, therefore, has strongly maintained, and probably rightly too, that in matters like this the Vedic scriptures should be esteemed as possessing the greatest authority, for they are the expressions of the most direct and certain experiences of such sages and seers as had no sectarian bias or selfish motive to say what they did not actually experience.

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The World : Its Place In Brahmanavada

‘यद्विदितं तदल्पं मर्त्यं दुःखात्मकं च’ शंकर (केन उप. भा. १.४)

‘न हि वस्तुवृत्तेन विकारो नाम कश्चिदस्ति’

शंकर (ब्र. सू. भा. २.१.१४)

Chapter 5

THE WORLD : ITS PLACE IN BRAHMAVADA

I The Nature of the World :

The World, at first sight, appears to be an aggregate of many static and diverse things. Its manifoldness, diversity and stability are, in fact, more apparent than its unity and instability. To a newly born baby the world around it may appear as a 'big blooming buzzing confusion'¹, as Prof. W. James has put it, or as a 'totum objectivum'² or 'presentation-continuum'³, as Prof. James Ward would like to say; but to an adult it is certainly not so. It does not take the baby very long to commence its activity of culling it out into different clear-cut objects which are soon felt by it as characterized by their own stable features. In any case the stability and discreteness of the components of the world are, to an average adult, decidedly more pronounced than the fact of their change and relatedness. But as soon as a person begins to reflect about them and to peep deeper into their nature their latter features also begin to crop up, with the result that to a really reflective person change and relations ultimately come to characterize the very essential nature of the world and its constituents. Multifarious are, indeed, the occasions in almost everybody's life that should not fail to press upon his mind not only the unstable nature of things but also the fact of there being intimate relations between them.

Prof. S. Radhakrishnan seems to have rightly said that "in the continuous flow of nature there is neither repose nor halt", and that "Nature is never satisfied with the level it has reached. It always aspires to other levels."⁴ The stability of things is, really, only apparent. What is deeply ingrained in their nature is change. There is nothing in the known world that is not subject to it. That is why thinkers like Prof. Bergson have gone to the extent of saying that "nothing but ceaseless change can exist."⁵

1 Psy. (Briefer course), p. 16.

3 Ibid. p. 77.

5 Joad : Intro. Modern Phil., p. 93.

2 Psychological Principles, p. 76.

4 An Idealist View of Life, p. p. 312-13.

~~be reasonably established or not we shall consider in chapter XL. What is to our present purpose is the recognition of the fact of change in the world outside as well as in our mental states which are also, in fact, one of the factors of the phenomenal world itself.~~

Our world, really speaking, is not divided into water-tight compartments. On the other hand, it is a system, a whole of intimately inter-connected parts. To a discerning eye the relatedness of its components is as good a fact as its change. Undoubtedly, there seems to be a unity behind its diversity, a purpose or plan behind its arrangement. In the words of Prof. Radhakrishnan, it is "a cosmos, a system of relationships intimately interdependent."¹ That there is unity underlying its apparent diversity and that there is change going on inside its seemingly stable objects may very well be said to be a considered opinion of almost all thoughtful men. The biologists uphold it; the physicists have demonstrated it, and the philosophers testify to it.

Any way, Shankara did not fail to recognize both these features of the world. Despite the fact that he did not deny its apparent diversity simply because it is so obtained², he was fully alive to the presence of order and arrangement in it. According to him both human and other animals' bodies display a definite arrangement of organs³, and the world constituted by fire, air, sun, and the like, carries on its functions with strict regularity⁴. As a matter of fact, the presence of order and arrangement discernible in this world has been advanced by him, as we have already seen in chapter IV, as a point against the Samkhya and Vaisheshika views of its creation from unconscious Prakṛiti and atoms respectively, and for his own view of recognizing an omniscient and omnipotent Lord alone as its ultimate cause. No doubt, Shankara did not view the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness of all things with a favour of acquiescence; nevertheless he took full cognizance of their changing nature. He repeatedly speaks of the world and its constituents as being non-eternal (anitya).⁵ All vikaras or effects are, according to him,

1 An Idealist View of Life, p. 312.

2 SBG. XIII. 2 (जगद्वैचित्र्योपलब्धेः)

3 SBS. II. 2. 1 (प्रतिनियतावयव)

4 SBS. I. 3. 39 (नियमेन स्वव्यापारे प्रवर्तते)

5 SBS. I. 3. 26; SB. Prashna Up. IV. 1; SBS. I. 1. 4 (अनित्यं संसाररूपम्)

subject to change¹. Destruction, he says, is the very nature of an effect.² Whatever has an origin must also have an end.³ An effect, indeed, implies change: Change is ingrained in its very nature. But what is subject to change is destructible. To be an effect and not to be destructible cannot go together. Nothing of the nature of becoming can ever attain beinghood. Eternity can never be the fate of what is produced. The world is therefore, according to Shankara, of ephemeral nature⁴, for it is a world of effects.⁵

Another characteristic feature of the world, according to Shankara, consists in its being a source and place of pleasure and pain both.⁶ Although Shankara rejects the Samkhya thesis that pleasure, etc., characterize the objects themselves,⁷ yet he acquiesces in the view that the world is a place where persons reap the fruits of their actions in the form of enjoyment and suffering both, according to their own deserts.⁸ The Samkhya-view has been criticized by him on the ground that pleasure and pain are mental states, and as such cannot reside in outward things.⁹ But he does not deny thereby the fact that the worldly objects are the operative causes of both pain and pleasure of the sentient creatures. On the other hand, he definitely views the world as consisting of both the objects of enjoyment, etc., and of the enjoyers thereof.¹⁰ The stern fact that both pleasure and pain characterize our world cannot, rightly speaking, be denied without contradicting a most common experience of, I think, every person living in it. It is true that Shankara has not viewed worldly pleasures very favourably. But that is a different thing, and cannot be taken as being tantamount to a denial of their presence in the world. But the presence of pleasures in the world cannot serve as a plea to think in terms of attaining perfect happiness in and through them. To seek enduring and unalloyed pleasure or happiness in this world is undoubtedly a wild-goose-chase. What has a beginning must also have an end. And so the pleasures derived from sense-object-contact or resulting from the satisfaction of diverse desires for finite objects must sooner or later pass away. Moreover, desiring pleasure, or an object of pleasure, is not the same as obtai-

1 SBG. II. 16 (विकारश्च व्यभिचरति)

2 SB. Isha Up. 14 (विनाशो धर्मो.....कार्यस्य)

3 SBG. VIII. 4 (विनाशीजनिमद्वस्तु)

4 SBG. XV. 3; X. 8.

5 SBS. I. 3. 41.

6 SBG. XII. 2 (सुखदुःखतद्वेतुलक्षणः संसारः); XIII. 20

7 SBS. II. 2. 1

8 SBG. X. 8 (see chapter VII.)

9 SBS. II. 2. 1

10 SBS. II. 1. 13, 14; I. 1. 4 (सुखदुःखतारतम्यं संसाररूपं)

Whether Bergson's view of universal and unqualified constant change can be reasonably maintained or not we shall consider in chapter XI. What is to our present purpose is the recognition of the fact of change in the world outside as well as in our mental states which are also, in fact, one of the factors of the phenomenal world itself.

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10 SBS. II. 1. 13, 14; I. 1. 4 (सुखदुःखतारतम्यं संसाररूपं)

ning it. Its attainment depends not only on one's desiring it, but also on so many other factors which it is not always within one's own power to control. We may not desire unpleasant things, or we may not invite our own affliction; but to avoid them does not entirely lie in our own hands. So long as we are in this world, we must always be prepared to face all the sorrows and sufferings which nature, our step-mother, has in store for us. As Tilaka has truly observed, 'there is more of sorrow than happiness in this world.'¹ Call it pessimism, or dub it as something still worse, there seems to be a greater truth in this view of the world than in the so-called optimism, especially in our own days of economic inequality, political perturbations and an almost all-round exploitation. Many a moral teacher and social reformer like Ruskin, Tolstoy, or Mahatma Gandhi, have come and gone; but the corrupt world seems to be going on as ever. Abiding peace and stable satisfaction, fair play and equitable justice, pure pleasure and profound piety, really seem to be something foreign to it.

Knowability, in some form or the other, may also be said to be a common characteristic of the objects of the world. What has never been known and can never be known has no objective existence. In the opinion of Shankara, to say that a thing is and is not known at all is an improper or self-contradictory assertion.² It, however, does not mean that things exist in this or that person's mind only. As we shall see in chapter VI, Shankara is definitely opposed to the subjective idealist's view which seeks to reduce all objective phenomena or facts to psychic states only. All the same he has no hitch in maintaining that all that is manifested is, or can be, an object of knowledge. It must be, he says, known somewhere, in some way, or by some one.³ Either a thing is not manifested at all, or it should be capable of being known in some way or the other. The objects which we speak anything about must be somehow known objects, or else we would not be able to say anything about them.

Now, what is known must also, according to Shankara, be finite, mortal, and the cause of sorrow.⁴ To be known is really to be limited; and to be limited is certainly to be subject to destruction. And what is subject to destruction is bound to be a source of sorrow. Knowability and objectivity, finiteness and destructibility, in fact, go together. They

1 Karmayogashastra, p. 106.

2 SB. Prashna Up. VI. 2 (वस्तुतत्त्वं भवति किञ्चित् ज्ञायते इति चानुपपन्नम्)

3 SB. Kena Up. I. 4 (क्वचित्किञ्चित्कस्यचिद्विदितं स्यात्)

4 SB. Kena Up. I. 4 (यद्विदितं तदहं मर्त्यं दुःखात्मकं च)

all equally characterize the world of names and forms, including the subjective states of our minds. The so-called subjective or psychic states, such as, cognition, desire, aversion, and the feelings of pain and pleasure, etc., as well as our minds themselves are held by Shankara, as in *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, to form as good a part of the objective world as the outward objects are ordinarily believed to do.¹ The characteristics of being known, finite, and changeful, etc., belong as much to them as to the latter.

II Shankara's reasons for declaring the world as unreal :

It was, in fact, in view of its nature itself that Shankara declared the world to be unreal. As we have seen in chapter III, *Brahma*, with Shankara, is the only ultimate or ontological reality, which, according to him, must be immutable, self-existent and eternal. Now, the word 'unreal' is an antonym of the word 'real'. It may, therefore, rightly be used for anything which is other than the real, or not real.² Whatever lacks the characteristic mark of the real must rightly be called unreal. And as the Real has been defined by Shankara as that which is self-existent, changeless or uncontradicted, anything that has a dependent existence, or is subject to change or contradiction, must, ipso facto, be unreal. The unreal of Shankara, therefore, is not only that which is absolutely non-existent, or illusory, like the son of a barren-mother and the appearance of a snake in a rope respectively, but also that which is ordinarily believed to be real but does not conform to the criterion of Reality upheld by him.

Though not absolutely non-existent or illusory the objects of our common experience are certainly neither self-existent nor immutable. They are all effects of some cause or the other, and have as such a beginning, as well as an end. Change, as we have said before, seems to be ingrained in their very nature. An effect or changing thing has no nature of its own which it can be said never to part with. Whatever nature it appears to have at a particular time it not only owes to something else, its cause, but, being subject to change, it cannot also retain it. Shankara has, therefore, maintained that no effect is a real thing.³ Whatever parts with that form by means of which it has been known (lit. determined) is called

1 BG. XIII. 6; and SB. on it.

2 SB. Chh. Up. VII. 3. 2 (सतोऽन्यत्वे अनृतत्वं)

3 SBS. II. 1. 14 (न हि वस्तुवृत्तेन विकारो नाम कश्चिदस्ति)

also SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (विकारोऽनृतम्)

false or unreal.¹ That about which our understanding or knowledge undergoes change is *asat*.² Thus, all becoming or change is held by Shankara to be unreal; for, before and after its origination and destruction respectively it is not obtained.³ Shankara has also said that all objects of our cognition, such as pot, etc., are unreal, for the simple reason that they are subject to change.⁴ As a matter of fact, to be an object of cognition is, with Shankara, the same as to be an effect or a changing thing.⁵ So, to be an object of cognition may also be said to be unreal. At places, therefore Shankara has also declared the unreality of the empirical objects on the ground of their knowability. For instance, in his commentary on Gaudapada's Karikas, he has expressed his argument in the form of a full-fledged syllogism. He says: "That the objects of waking experience are unreal is the *Pratijna* (enunciation). 'Because they are objects of cognition'—is the *hetu* (reason). 'Like the objects of a dream'—is the example. 'As the objects seen in a dream are unreal, so in the case of (the objects of) waking experience 'being seen or knowability' is also present, it is the application of the reason (*hetupanaya*). 'Therefore the objects of waking experience are also unreal'—is the conclusion."⁶ In brief, Shankara's argument is that the objects of waking experience are unreal because they are objects of cognition. In fact to be known is to be finite. The infinite cannot be known as this or that. But what is finite cannot be self-existent. It must be an effect of something; and hence unreal. For, as an effect, it cannot be obtained apart from its cause.⁷ We can never have, for example, an earthen pot apart from its material cause, the clay. The pot, therefore, is not a real entity. It is only a name which originates from speech only.⁸ Just as the space limited by a jar, etc., has no existence of its own apart from that of the ubiquitous space, so also the whole world constituted of the enjoyers and the enjoyed, etc., is non-existent apart from *Brahma*,⁹ the ultimate ground and support of all. The so-called other causes in the world are, in turn, the effects of

1 SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (यद्रूपेण अनृतमित्युच्यते)

2 SBG. II. 16 (यद्विषया बुद्धिर्व्यभिचरति तदसत्)

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 SB. Tait Up. II. 7 (दृश्यं नाम विकारः)

6 SB. Mand. Up. Karika. II. 4.

7 SBG. II. 16 (सर्वो विकारः कारणव्यतिरेकेणानुपलब्धेः असत्)

8 SBS. II. 1. 14; SB. Chh. Up. VI. 1. 4,

9 SBS. II. 1. 14.

some other causes. They are not uncaused causes. The only uncaused cause existing in its own right is Brahma alone. Brahma alone, therefore, is real. Everything else is only an appearance of it. It is unreal; for, it has no existence of its own apart from that of Brahma.

Again, referring to the unreality of the water in a mirage, Shankara tells us that it is unreal because it has no definite nature of its own, because it cannot be described as being of this or that nature (svarupenanupakhyatvat)¹. This reason advanced by Shankara, we may say, seems to contain in a nut-shell the entire gist or Mr. Bradley's dialectics employed by him in his Appearance and Reality to shew that everything in this world is an appearance, and not Reality. Shriharsha, the well-known author of Khandanakhandakhadya, probably took his hint from Shankara's this short but significant formula, viz. 'svarupenanupakhyatvat', which he worked out in detail to demonstrate the untenability of almost all the concepts in terms of which the realists, especially the Naiyayikas, have sought to establish the reality of the empirical world. As an illustration of it we may refer to his brief criticism of the Nyaya-Vaisheshika notion of substance. According to this school 'a substance is that which is the substratum of qualities'. But Shriharsha has pointed out that this notion of substance is inconsistent; for, it is applicable to qualities (like colour, etc.) as well, in so far as they may also be said to be in possession of the quality of number, and the like. Now, if it be said that the appearance of quality in a quality is illusory, how can then it be maintained, Shriharsha asks, that it is otherwise in the case of substance, such as earth ? If the Naiyayika, thereupon, says that there is absence of obstruction there (i. e. in the case of earth, etc.), we would, then, maintain, says Shriharsha, that it is equally so in the case of qualities as well. Moreover, the Naiyayika, Shriharsha says, is required to state what this obstruction, which stands in the way of the qualities to possess qualities, is. If the Naiyayika rejoins that it is his doctrine that qualities are without qualities, Shriharsha retorts that then the very establishment of qualities, like colour, is itself not possible.² Thus, Shriharsha applies the same formula, viz., svarupenanupakhyatvat' to the other concepts, one after another, and tries thereby to bring out the inconsistencies involved in them.

Another criterion which Shankara has made use of in assessing the so-believed reality of the empirical objects is that of sublation (badha).

1 SBS. II. 1. 14.

2 Vide Khandanakhandakhadya, Sec. 4, p. 579 (गुणादयोऽप्यभावात्)

The empirical or practical reality of these objects is, no doubt, gladly admitted by him.¹ But speaking from the Ultimate or Absolute point of view he has no hitch in maintaining that they are unreal because they are subject to sublation. He says that 'though this world is experienced by us and is also capable of serving our practical purposes, it is, nevertheless, unreal like a dream because it is subject to sublation in an after-moment.² Really, if we acquiesce in the view that 'the real is that which is free from sublation'³, we cannot escape the conclusion which Shankara has drawn. Our waking-experiences are as much subject to sublation in sound sleep and in a dream-state as are those states in waking life.⁴ If sublation (badha) is taken as a criterion of the unreality of a state and non-sublation as one of its reality, all our mental states along with all their contents will, in fact, have to be viewed as unreal; and, then, their witness or knower alone which uniformly experiences all of them and their sublation, but is not itself sublated, will be the only reality left with us.⁵

Badha (contradiction or sublation) is, indeed, of three types - experiential, logical, and scriptural. When Shankara speaks of the sublation of the dream-experiences in waking life, and of the waking experiences in a dream-state or sound sleep, and so on, he is undoubtedly speaking of experiential contradiction or sublation. But when he proclaims the unreality of empirical objects due to their changing and dependent nature, etc., it is a sort of logical contradiction to which he refers. While an experiential contradiction consists in one experience being negated by another actual experience, we have a logical contradiction when some experience or thought, is contradicted, or shown to be inconsistent, by means of reflection or thought. So when Shankara views the empirical objects as unreal because of their nature, it is their logical, and not experiential contradiction (badha), that he has in his mind. Experience is, no-doubt, a proof; but every proof is not experiential. A logical proof is by no means the same as experiential proof. The former may or may not be verified in and through the latter, and the latter may or may not admit of the former. Both these forms of contradiction, however, differ from scriptural contradiction which primarily appeals to the authority of scriptures for the denial of the reality of the manifold world.

Now, so far as Shankara's recourse to scriptures as a means of proving the unreality of the world is concerned we may conveniently

1 SB. Prashna Up. IV.

2 AP., 56.

3 Panchadashi, III. 29 (सत्यत्वं बाधराहित्यं)

4 AP., 57.

5 Vide AP. 58.

illustrate it by referring to his commentary on Brahma-sutra II. 1.14. In the first place, we find it maintained there that the world cannot be real for it is an effect and all effects have been declared by the scriptures to be unreal. To take an instance, reference has been made to Chhandogya Upanishad where it has been said that 'all the effects of clay are mere names originating from speech only. What is real is clay alone'.¹ This illustration Shankara brings to bear on the world and its cause, the Brahma, as propounded in the scriptures², and thereby maintains that the former must be unreal, for, according to the scriptures it is an effect. In this connection Shankara has referred to some other such scriptural texts also as speak of the non-existence (abhava) of an effect apart from its cause³, or of the non-difference of the world from Brahma⁴, and has, on their basis, concluded that Brahma alone is real while everything else, unreal or false, Reference is, then, made to those scriptural-texts which speak of, or promise, the knowledge of all in and through the knowledge of one.⁵ If the world, he asks, were something really real and, as such, different from Brahma, how could the scriptures speak of, or promise, the knowledge of all through the knowledge of one ? This, he says, is possible only if the scriptures be taken to be propounding the unreality of the entire paraphernalia of the phenomenal world.⁶ Shankara has, then, invoked the aid of such scriptural texts as have explicitly denounced the vision of duality.⁷ If the pluralistic vision (of the world) were as true as the unitary vision (of Brahma), the scriptures would not have denounced the former as being that which leads one, who has it, from death to death.⁸ In the opinion of Shankara, "Scripture, showing by the instance of the thief that the false-minded is bound while the true minded is released⁹, declares that unity is the only true existence while manifoldness is evolved out of wrong knowledge, for, if both were true how could the man who acquiesces in the reality of this phenomenal world be called false-minded ?"¹⁰ If the plurality of the phenomenal world were taken as something real, release could not be said to result from

1 Chh. Up. VI. 1. 4.

2 Tait. Up. III. 1.

3 Chh. Up. VI. 4. 1 (अपागादग्नेरनित्वम्)

4 Chh. Up. VI. 8. 7; VII. 25. 2; Br. Up. II. 4. 6; Mund. Up. II. 2. 11.

5 Mund. Up. I. 1. 3; Chh. Up. VI. 1. 3; Br. Up. IV. 5. 6.

6 SBS. II. 1. 14 (..... न चाज्यथैकविज्ञानेन सर्वविज्ञानं सम्पद्यते)

7 Br. Up. IV. 4. 19; IV. 2. 4.

8 Vide SBS. II. 1. 14 (..... सेददृष्टिमपवदज्ञैवेतद्दृश्यति)

9 Chh. Up. VI. 16.

10 SBS. II. 1. 14 (Thibaut's Trans.).

knowledge. For in that case there would be no wrong knowledge to be dispelled by means of perfect or right knowledge. How can the knowledge of unity, Shankara asks, be held to remove the cognition of manifoldness if both of them are equally real ?¹ Thus, Shankara has tried to prove the unreality of the world through an appeal to scriptures as well.

III Pratibhasika, Vyavaharika and Paramarthika Sattas :

Our somewhat elaborate account of Shankara's reasons to prove the unreality of the world should not mislead us to think that he regarded it either as absolutely non-existent or as an illusion or mental existence only. That Shankara's Brahmvada is not mere mentalism or subjective-idealism we shall see in detail in the next chapter. Here let us turn to the difference between the three types of satta (existence) which have been clearly and definitely recognized by him. In this connection it should, at first, be borne in mind that Shankara has distinguished all the forms of existence from non-existence. According to him what is absolutely non-existent can be neither a cause nor an effect. Neither anything is created from it, nor is it created from anything else. Nothing can come out of nothing; and what has never had an existence has never come out of anything whatsoever. A triangular circle, for example, is something absolutely non-existent. Nothing to say of actually coming into existence, it does not even illusorily appear to be there. A barren-woman's son and the horns of a hare are Shankara's pet examples of absolutely non-existent things. A barren woman's son, he says, is produced neither actually nor even through 'Maya'.² The creation of an unreal thing like the horns of a hare, etc., is never seen.³ Such things, if we can speak of them as things, have no 'being' underlying them. They are self-less (niratmaka) and have no ground to sustain them (niraspada); and nothing that is of this type is fit to serve any practical purpose.⁴ Such things are undoubtedly unreal, utterly unreal; but everything 'unreal' is not 'like' them. Illusions are, for example, unreal, and we all rightly believe them to be so; but we would not say that illusions are altogether groundless. Illusory appearances, such as 'a rope-snake' and 'water in a mirage', etc., are perceived no-where and by no person without a ground underlying them.⁵ An

1 SBS. II. 1. 14.

2 SB. Mand. Karika, I. 6 (ब्रह्म्यापुत्रो न तत्त्वेन मायया वाऽपि जायते)

3 SB. Tait. Up. II. 6 (असतः शशविषाणादेः समुत्पत्त्यदर्शनात्)

4 SBG. IX. 4 (न हि निरात्मकं किञ्चिद्व्यवहारायावकल्पते)

5 SB. Mand. Karika, I. 6 (न हि निरास्पदा केनचित्)

illusory object is not, of course, really there; nevertheless it appears to be there and is also taken as something real till its apparent reality somehow gets contradicted. The same is the case with dreams and other hallucinations. They too may be said to have a ground underlying them. If not objective, a subjective ground of them cannot be denied. Some desire, some impression (*samskara*) or feeling, unconscious though it may be, must necessarily be there to account for their origination and to serve as their sustaining ground. The illusory appearances, therefore, may very well be said to be different from absolutely non-existent things, not only on the basis of appearing to be there but also in respect of having a ground underlying them. Shankara may, therefore, be said to be perfectly right in making this distinction. The illusory objects may not themselves be real; but at least they serve to point to some reality underlying them. But the absolutely non-existent things, like the son of a barren woman, utterly fail to serve even this purpose.

For illusory appearances Shankara has used the epithet 'Pratibhasika satta' which means merely apparent existence. That their existence is not real existence even from a layman's point of view cannot be gainsaid. All the same their consciousness cannot be said to be unreal, for unlike its contents, the illusory objects, it is not subject to sublation.¹ For example, "The man who has risen from sleep", says Shankara, "does indeed consider the effects perceived by him in his dream such as being bitten by a snake, bathing in a river, etc., to be unreal; but he does not on that account consider the consciousness he had of them to be unreal likewise."² The same is true of illusory appearances of waking life. It is only the snake seen in a rope which is sublated, and hence declared to be false, on knowing the rope as-such; but the 'seeing' of it is never regarded by us as being false, because it is never sublated. So the consciousness of illusory objects is certainly not on the same par with the illusory objects. So also the non-illusory objects of our every-day waking life differ from the illusory appearances. They too are not sublated in the way the illusory appearances are. The absence of their consciousness in a dream-state or in the state of sound sleep, may, nodoubt, be called their sublation. But this sublation is not exactly similar to the sublation of dream-experiences on waking, or of an illusory object on the realization of its illusory nature on the cognition of the reality underlying it. When we

1 SBS. II. 1. 14 (अबाध्यमानत्वात्)

2 SBS. II. 1. 14 (Thibaut's Trans.).

wake up the dream-objects, nodoubt, do disappear. But that is not all. Along with the disappearance of these objects and the appearance of the objects of waking experience there also arises in us the consciousness or feeling of the unreality of the former and of the reality of the latter. Similarly when an illusory object of waking life comes to be known for what it is, the consciousness of its unreality as well as of the reality of its underlying substratum inevitably appears on the scene. But it is not so in the case of the sublation of the objects of waking life in a dream-state or sound sleep: The fact that in a dream-state or sound sleep they do actually disappear cannot, of course, be denied. But there is certainly no evidence to show that they are there also judged to be unreal. In the state of sound sleep there is neither the consciousness of their unreality nor that of their reality. In a dream, nodoubt, there is the consciousness of dream-objects and of their reality too; but that consciousness is not accompanied by the consciousness of the unreality of the objects perceived in waking life. The common objects of waking experience, therefore, cannot be said to be sublated exactly like dream-objects, etc. And this is exactly what Shankara means to say when he (while distinguishing them from the contents of a dream) maintains that 'the things of which we are conscious in the waking state of our life are never sublated in any state in the same manner' (as the dream-objects are on being awake)¹. Superficially viewed this assertion of Shankara may seem to contradict his another assertion (previously referred to in this very chapter) that the objects of this world are unreal because of their sublation in a dream-state and sound sleep.² But this contradiction is not real. For, when he speaks of their sublation (badha) in a dream-state or in the state of sound sleep, he means thereby their mere disappearance, and not their disappearance accompanied by the consciousness of their unreality. But when he denies their sublation, he takes the word sublation in the latter sense. And that this should be so taken is indicated by the word 'evam' which Shankara is careful enough to add while denying the fact of the sublation of waking experiences in the dream and sleep states.

No doubt, in some respects the objects of our common experience may be rightly said to bear resemblance to illusory appearances or contents of a dream-state, in so far as they are all objects of our consciousness, subjects to change, non-eternal and finite, and different from abso-

1 SBS. II. 2. 29 (नैवं.....बाध्यते)

2 AP. 56 (असद्रूपो यथा स्वप्नः उत्तरक्षणबाधतः)

lutely non-existent things, and so on. But there are, at the same time, differences also between them. While the so-called objects of a dream-state or of an illusory experience exist in our minds, and are, as such, our private or personal experiences only, the non-illusory objects of waking-experience are facts of common experience, and so truly objective in nature. The former serve no practical purpose of ours. The water of a mirage, for instance, cannot be used either for drinking or for bathing purposes. But the practical usefulness of the latter, for example, of commonly known water, is a matter of our every-day experience. Shankara has, therefore, made a clear distinction between them. The former, as we have stated before, he calls Pratibhasika satta, whereas he has designated the latter as vyavaharika satta. The existence of the former is apparent only while that of the latter is empirical, or of practical nature. The water which quenches our thirst, Shankara would say, is certainly real if compared with the water in a mirage.¹ The former is commonly taken as real, and the latter as unreal.² The reality of the former is as much a matter of common experience as the unreality of the latter. The unreflective man, therefore, does not question the reality of the objects of his sense-contact. Their practical utility is so great, and their appearance so impressive, enduring and recurrent, that even many reflective persons find it difficult to reconcile themselves to the thought of their unreality. Shankara, however, distinguishes them all from Brahma, the absolute Reality which, according to him, as we have already seen, is perfectly immutable, Self-existent and Self-shining. It alone is his Paramarthika satta or ultimate Reality.

So far as the empirical or practical reality of the world and its objects is concerned Shankara, of course, does not question it. From the empirical point of view he feels no hesitation in calling them real. But from a higher or true Reality point of view he also does not fight shy of designating them as unreal.³

The ascertainment of the reality and unreality of things, according to Shankara, is mind-dependent.⁴ This, however, does not mean that he regards the empirical objects as something mental or subjective only. For, he has explicitly admitted that the knowledge of Brahma or ultimate

1 SB. Tait. Up. II. 6 (मृगतृष्णिकाद्यपेक्षया.....सत्यं)

2 Vide SB. Prashna Up. IV. 5 (सच्च परमार्थोदकादि)

3 SB. Isha Up. I; SBS. II. 1. 14; II. 1. 17; II. 1. 22; II. 2. 10,

4 SBG. II. 16 (सदसती बुद्धितन्त्रे)

Reality, like all perceptual knowledge, is object-dependent, and not dependent on the activity of a person.¹ The reality and unreality of things undoubtedly reside in the things themselves; all the same the nature of things has got to be tested before they are called real or unreal. And this testing of their nature is the work of our intellect or mind (buddhi). It is how the reality and unreality of things can be said to be mind-dependent. In fact it was a result of testing the nature of empirical objects that Shankara was led to call them unreal and to view the Absolute Reality, the Brahma, as the only true or paramarthika satta.

The distinction between the illusory (Pratibhasika) and empirical (vyavaharika) existence is, really speaking, a matter of common belief. But persons in general do not go and see beyond it. To them the reality of the empirical objects is the only reality. Shankara, however, does not rest contented in the thought of such a reality. On getting a hint from the Upanishads he sets himself a-thinking, and as a result of that he comes to realize a clear distinction between the empirical and the absolute or true reality. In the words of Dr. Sinha, "Shankara never denies the pragmatic or relative reality of the empirical objects of the world."² When he calls them unreal it is always from the ultimate point of view that he does so. And his recognition of the three-fold existence (satta)—prati-bhasika, vyavaharika and paramarthika—is a point that needs to be borne in mind in this connection.

Before Shankara Nagarjuna, a most prominent Buddhist scholar, had also attempted a similar classification of existence. For illusory appearance, or Pratibhasika satta of Shankara, he used the word alokasamvriti and for empirical reality (vyavaharika satta) and ultimate reality (paramarthika satta) he used the words lokasamvriti and paramartha satya respectively.³ But that is no reason why we should view the distinction which Shankara has made between them as one borrowed from Nagarjuna. Shankara was capable of making it for himself as Nagarjuna was. In fact, even Nagarjuna cannot really be said to have made this distinction independently. So far as the distinction between illusory and empirical objects is concerned, it can confidently be said that it must have always been made by men of common sense from the very infancy of their rational life; and the distinction between the empirical and ultimate reality can rightly be said to have been made even in the days of the Chhandogya Upanishad.⁴ Does not this Upanishad, when it speaks of the reality of

1 SBS. I. 1. 4 (न पुद्बव्यापारतन्त्रा वस्तुतन्त्रा)

2 AHIP. Vol. II, p. 536.

3 Ibid.

4 See Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 503.

clay alone and calls its various modifications mere names originating from speech only, mean to hold that only Brahma, the ultimate cause of all, is really real, while everything else that has Brahma for its origin and support, an empirical reality only ?

IV The anirvachaniyata (indescribability) of the world

In fact, the empirical world is of a peculiar nature. It can neither be said to be absolutely non-existent nor to be absolutely real, nor even to be a mere mental existence. To be true to its nature we have got to distinguish it from both the truly real and the unreal. Its finite, dependent and changeful nature which is subject to both logical and experiential contradiction, does not entitle it to be viewed as real; but at the same time its objective appearance, durability, etc., do not fail to distinguish it from both the absolutely non-existent and illusory objects. The words 'real' and 'unreal' are contradictory terms. So we cannot say that 'it is both real and unreal', or that 'it is neither real nor unreal.' For, to maintain that 'it is both real and unreal' would mean to violate the logical law of Contradiction; while to say that 'it is neither real nor unreal' would involve the violation of the Law of Excluded Middle. Shankara therefore uses the epithet 'anirvachaniya' (indescribable) for it. He says, "The names and forms (i. e. the empirical world characterized by names and forms) are indescribable either as real or as different from it."¹ "By that element of plurality.....which is characterised by name and form, which is evolved as well as non-evolved, which is not to be defined either as the Existing or the Non-existing, Brahma becomes the basis of this entire apparent world with its changes, and so on....."² The world of duality is neither real, because it is subject to contradiction, nor unreal, because its evident appearance cannot be denied. Neither it is self-existent, nor non-existent appearing as existent. It is also not both existent and non-existent, for these are contradictory terms. Therefore it is indescribable.³ According to Shankara this indescribable world, though said to be ultimately grounded in Brahma itself, is directly a product of indescribable 'maya'. Let us, therefore, see what this maya of Shankara is.

V The Maya concept and its antiquity

The word 'maya' is at least as old as Rigveda, the oldest available scripture in the world: It is not only once or twice, but a good number

1 SBS. I. 1. 5; II. 1. 14 (नामरूपे तत्त्वान्यस्यान्यामनिर्वचनीये)

2 SBS. II. 1. 27 (Thibaut's Trans.)

3 Tattvopadesha, 52, 53.

of times, that this word occurs in that old scripture. To take the most popular example of its occurrence there we may refer to the 'mantra' (hymn) "Indro mayabhih pururupa iyate",¹ which means that Indra assumes many forms through mysterious powers. It has been observed in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics that the term maya has also been applied in Rigveda to the wiles of both demons and gods. For example, when it has been said that "By overcoming the maya of the demons Indra won the Soma",² or that "The sorceress uses maya",³ or that "Men of evil craftines are mayin",⁴ the word maya seems to have been definitely used for the powers or stratagems of evil. For further illustration of such a use of the term maya, reference may also be made to Rigveda (V. II. 9), (VI. LXI. 3), (LXXXII. 4) and (VII. XCIX. 4).⁵ But when it has been maintained that "Through maya Mitra and Varuna send rain and guard their law" (V. LXIII. 3, 7), or that "Through maya the sun-bird is adorned" (X. CLXXVII. 1), or that "Sun and moon succeed each other in virtue of maya (X. LXXXV. 18), and so on, the same term has been applied to good deities; while in the assertion that "Through maya Indra triumphs over the mayin demons" (I. XI. 7 and V. XXX. 6) it has been simultaneously applied to both a good deity and demons alike.⁶ But whether applied to a good deity or to a devilish being its general significance does not seem to have suffered. For in both cases it conveys the sense of some sort of uncommon or supernatural power. And it is more or less in the same sense that this word seems to have been used in Atharvaveda also, when it has been maintained there that "Sun and moon follow one another by maya",⁷ and that "Luck in gambling is invoked by the aid of maya."⁸ This is, however, not the only sense in which the word maya has been used. For example, when it is said in the Atharvaveda that "maya was born from maya",⁹ the word maya standing as the subject of the proposition is apparently used in the sense of an effect of maya rather than in the original sense of mysterious or magical power in which the latter word maya may be said to have been used. Similarly, in the assertion "When thou didst go, O Indra, waxing in body, speaking

1 Rigveda, VI. 47. 18 (quoted in ERE).

2 Rigveda (VII. XCVIII. 5) }

3 Ibid. (VII. CIV. 24) }

4 Ibid. (I. XXXIX. 2) }

quoted in ERE., p. 503.

5 C/O ERE., p. 503.

6 Vide ERE., p. 503.

7 Atharvaveda (XIII. II. 11.) & (VII. XXXI. 1) Vide ERE., p. 504.

8 Ibid. (IV. XXXVIII. 3)

"

9 Atharvaveda (VIII. IX. 5) referred to in ERE., p. 504.

mighty things among folk, maya was that which they called thy battles,"¹ the term maya can be more conveniently taken in the sense of the effect of some sort of power rather than in that of power itself.

In fact, if we acquiesce in the view that an effect is really not different from its cause, but only an expression or manifested form of it, we may quite reasonably speak of it as the cause itself. The cause, no doubt, cannot be spoken of as the effect, but an effect may undoubtedly be described in terms of its cause. For example, it is not correct to say that water is ice or that hydrogen and oxygen are water, but there seems to be nothing wrong in saying that ice is water or that water is nothing but hydrogen and oxygen. An effect is of the nature of its cause, but the cause is not of the nature of its effects.² The knowledge of a cause may in a way be said to be the knowledge of its effect or effects, but the knowledge of effect as such is not the same as the knowledge of its cause. As the Chhandogya Upanishad says, by knowing the one clod of clay all that is made of clay is known³; but it cannot similarly be said that the clay is known by knowing a jar any other form or effect of it. So the word maya which primarily meant a mysterious creative energy, power, or will, may also be used for anything that is a creation of it. This word is derived from the root 'ma' which literally means 'to measure.' It may mean either the power of measuring, i. e. determining or dividing, or what is measured or determined by means of such power. When Shri Betty Heimann says that "By means of his power of measuring, that is to say dividing, Krishna assumes all actual forms of the empirical world," and that "all mayas, all measurable definite things are then inferior to the Avyaktam....."⁴, he has used the term maya in both its senses mentioned here.

The word maya is found in some Upanishads as well. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, for instance, repeats the well-known mantra of Rigveda, viz., 'Indro mayabhih pururupa iyate', letter by letter.⁵ In the Shvetashvatara Upanishad this word has occurred in two couplets continuously. In the first couplet it has been maintained that the Chhandas, the sacrifices, the rituals, the religious observances, the past, the future and whatever (else) the Vedas speak about, (in short) this (entire) universe, the wielder of maya creates from that (akshara parama vyoma or Brahma

1 Rigveda (X. LIV. 2).

2 SBS. II. 1. 9 (कार्यस्य कारणत्वम् न तु कारणस्य कारित्वम्)

3 Chh. Up. VI. 1. 4.

4 Indian And Western Phil., p. 51.

5 Br. Up. II. 5. 19.

lit. the indestructible super-sky); and in that (i. e. the world so created) the other (the individual soul) is bound by maya.¹ The second couplet in a way reiterates in a summary form, and thereby seems to emphasize, what has already been asserted in the first. It says: Verily know maya as the origin (prakriti of all that appears to be there) and the Great Lord as the wielder of maya. It is by the parts or constituents of this maya that the entire world is pervaded.² In these Upanishadic assertions the word maya may be said to have been used in three senses. As in the Vedas so also here it is primarily used for that wonderful power which has for its locus the Great Lord and by means of which the creation or projection of the entire universe has been made possible. But then it is also used in the sense of the creations of this wonderful power when it is said that it is by the parts of maya that the entire world is pervaded; and in the assertion that it is by maya that the individual soul is bound in this world (of maya) we may also read in this term the sense of ignorance or avidya on the part of the individual soul; for the self-same Upanishad which has made this assertion has also repeatedly maintained that the bondage of an individual can be terminated through knowledge alone.³ What comes to an end through knowledge must necessarily be due to ignorance. If the extinction of one's bondage in the world results from right knowledge about one's own true nature, the absence of that knowledge may rightly be viewed as the cause of that bondage. So the word maya may be said to have been used here in the sense of ignorance or avidya also.

In the Prashna Upanishad when it is said that the pure being of Brahma is attained only by those persons in whom there is no deceit, falsehood and maya,⁴ the word maya is used neither in the sense of creative energy or power, nor in that of the objects created by it. There it may be said to have been used either in the sense of villainy or in the sense of ignorance only. Our ignorance is, indeed, a very mysterious thing, probably no less unintelligible than the mysterious maya of the Great Lord. So, if the seers of the mantras under consideration have used the term maya for it, there seems to be little or no inappropriateness in it.

The word maya is found in Shrimadbhagavadgita also. It is true that it does not occur there very frequently. It is only in four shlokas (couplets) and, in all, five times only that it has been used there.⁵ All the

1 Shvet. Up. IV. 9.

2 Ibid, IV. 10.

3 See Shvet. Up., IV. 7, 11, 14-17, 20; V. 6, 13, 14; VI. 6, 12, 13, 15, 20....

4 Prashna Up. I. 16 (न मेष्टु जिह्ममृतं न माया)

5 BG, IV. 6; VII. 14, 15, 25.

same it serves to help us in grasping its general significance. In one place Lord Krishna, speaking as supreme God, says: Although I am unborn, and of immutable and indestructible nature, and the supreme Lord of all that exists, yet retaining my nature as it is,¹ or controlling my own prakriti—the maya that has the three 'gunas' for its self,² I manifest myself or appear to be born through my maya, in every yuga.³ At another place he says: This divine maya of mine which is permeated through and through by its gunas is certainly very difficult to be overcome. Those persons only who come, or devote themselves, to me, get across this maya.⁴ Those persons whose conduct is bad, whose knowledge has been stolen by maya, whose minds are immersed in worldly objects and in the pleasure they derive from them, who are of vile and demon-like nature, do not seek me.⁵

That maya is something dependent upon the divine spiritual Being, and not an independent entity, is quite clear from the above-mentioned assertions, and that it is a mysterious power which makes it possible for the supreme Lord to retain His own nature intact through all the finite forms He assumes, is also equally obvious from them. But some doubt may undoubtedly arise as to whether it is the Lord Himself who steals the knowledge of people by means of His Maya, the primal mysterious power, or it is the worldly objects, the effects or projections of Maya, which by dint of their glamour dazzle and delude them. This doubt, however, is not well-founded. For Lord Krishna himself has left no room for it as he has clearly maintained elsewhere that the ubiquitous Lord has nothing to do with the good or bad actions of persons, and that they get deluded because their power of knowing the true nature of things is shrouded by ignorance.⁶ We should therefore interpret the word maya occurring in the phrase 'stolen by maya' (mayapahrita) so as to mean either the objective effects of maya or the ignorance of the persons concerned. Thus, we may say that in Bhagavadgita the word maya has been used in three senses, viz., the mysterious power of the supreme Lord, the worldly effects of this power and the ignorance of the individual soul.

Similar are, indeed, the senses in which the term maya has been used by the author of Yogavasishtā. In one place, for instance, he speaks of maya, called prakriti also, as being the natural vibratory power

1 C/o RBG. IV. 6.

2 C/o SBG. IV. 6.

3 BG. IV. 6.

4 BG. VII. 14.

5 Ibid. VII. 15.

6 BG. V. 15.

(spandashakti) and divine desire of Shiva.¹ It is said to be that creative will of Brahma which spreads the entire objective appearance², while Brahma is described as the lord of all and as being endowed with all possible powers.³ But elsewhere, and probably from another point of view, Brahma is also said to be free from all maya and avidya⁴. Here, in the first place, 'Maya' is definitely viewed as a mysterious or wonderful power of Shiva or Brahma. But when Brahma is said to be free from maya, the word maya may be said to have been used in the sense of both the creative power and the created effects of it. For, the latter cannot exist in the absence of the former. The negation of the former implies the negation of the latter; for, no effect can exist without its cause being present there. Apart from this the third sense of the term maya, viz., ignorance or avidya, may also be said to be present in the Yogavasishttha. For example, when it has been maintained that a person's 'mind is the navel of the whole wheel of maya and that if it stops to move, there is nothing to disturb it'⁵, the word maya can by no means be taken to mean either the mysterious power of God or the world which has been held elsewhere as a creation of that power. The movement of a person's mind in the form of desires, etc., being the cause of his own subjective world, its cessation can at best be calculated to result in the extinction of his private subjective world only, and not in that of the objective world which has its origin in the mysterious power of the omnipresent and omnipotent God. A person may, of course, revise his own view of the world and may attribute his former view to his ignorance about the true nature of his self; but he cannot thereby make others close their eyes to it. To others whose minds have not yet attained a similar state of quietude and enlightenment the world will continue to appear as ever, and so they will continue to be disturbed by it. So, an individual person's mind can be said to be the navel of neither the world-projecting maya of God, nor of the so-projected effects of that maya. It may at best be viewed as the navel of his own subjective world which may be held to owe its appearance to his finite, faulty and coloured vision, and so to disappear when his mind gets perfectly quiet and clear to reflect the absolute Reality underlying and sustaining it. The term maya may therefore be taken here

1 Yogavasishttha, 6/2. 83. 14 (सा राम स्पन्दशक्तिरकृत्रिमा)

2 Ibid. 6/2. 84. 6 (स्पन्दशक्तिस्तदिच्छेदम्)

3 Ibid. 3. 67. 2.

4 Ibid. 6/1. 125. 1 (नाविद्यास्तीह नो माया)

5 Yogavasishttha, V. 49. 40 (चित्तं तन्न किञ्चित्प्रवाच्यते)

in the sense of one's faulty vision of one's own real or ultimate nature. In other words, it may be said to have been used here in the sense of one's avidya, or of its products, of which one's mind can figuratively be viewed as forming a veritable navel.

The view that our notions about the world we live in are generally avidyatmaka or erroneous, and that the world is an effect of the mysterious maya of the omnipotent God, and not an evolute of an independent prakriti (causal matrix), or a composite effect of eternal and indestructible atoms, has also been expressed in various Puranas: For instance, it has been maintained in the Brahmapurana that the erroneous appearance of duality is called avidya¹, and that an individual person deludes himself by his own maya of seeing duality². In fact, such a view seems to have been suggested by Rigveda itself. For, "In Rigveda, I. CLXIV. 46, 'ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti, that which is one the sages call by many names', it is felt that all plurality is a matter of words only, or in X. XC. 2, where the whole universe is said to be purusha alone, it is implied that all else but purusha is illusion"³. Any way, the Brahma-purana does use the word avidya for maya, and regards the world, as it ordinarily appears, to be unreal, although elsewhere it has also described it as being permeated by the maya of Vishnu⁴ which it has held to be the origin of the entire world consisting of all our subjective and objective experiences and so to be the very para (super-excellent) prakriti (generally known as) diversified into its (well-known) twenty-four forms⁵. So also in Vishnu-purana and Linga-purana all duality that appears to be there has been viewed as an unreal appearance of the one underlying reality called by various names, such as, Achyuta, Vijnana, Vishnu, etc., and Maya is the name that has been applied to this duality, viz., the world of diverse appearances; for, these appearances are all effects and cannot be described as either absolutely real or as absolutely unreal⁶.

Thus, we find that the word maya is of very great antiquity and had been in considerable use in orthodox literature much before the time of Shankara. There may be some difference of opinion among scholars with regard to its exact import; but the fact of its occurrence in so many

1 Vide SB. Shvet. Up. Introduction (द्वैतभ्रान्तिरविद्याख्या)

2 Ibid. (स्वमायया स्वमात्मानं मोहयेद्वैतरूपया)

3 ERE., p. 504.

4 Vide SB. Shvet. Up. Introduction (जगद्रूपं विष्णोर्मायामयं मृषा)

5 Ibid, 6 Vide Linga-purana quoted in SB, Shvet. Up. Intro.

ancient scriptures cannot be questioned. Shankara, we are sure, was in no case the first person to have used it. This indicates, in a way, an inconsistency in the position of those critics of Shankara who, while clinging to the authority of these very scriptures, have tried to condemn him by calling him a mayavadin. If Shankara is to be called a mayavadin simply because he has employed the term *maya* in his account of the empirical world, there is no reason why the authors of so many orthodox scriptures should not be said to belong to the same category. Of course, the differential treatment meted out to Shankara by these critics could be justified if it could be established that he has been unfaithful to the scriptural texts. But in point of fact it is not possible so to do. For, on a fair elucidation of Shankara's meanings of the term *maya*, we find a genuine affinity between them and the senses in which it had been in use in the scriptures referred to here. Shankara's view of *maya*, in fact, seems to be more faithful to the intended purport of these scriptures than the view of any anti-Shankara follower of them. And that it is so is duly corroborated by Mr. Gough's impartial observation with regard to Shankara's exposition of the Upanishads and the Brahma-sutras. In Mr. Thibaut's words, Mr. Gough is definitely of the opinion "that Shankara is the generally recognized expositor of true Vedanta doctrine"¹:

VI 'Maya' in Shankara's Brahmapada :

As in Rigveda and other ancient scriptures, so in Shankara's works too 'Maya' has been primarily spoken of as a mysterious power of the almighty Ishvara or God. It is through and by dint of this His indescribable divine power that the supreme Lord of all assumes, unaffectedly, the creatorship of the entire universe.² This power, says Shankara, has got to be posited, for, "without it the highest Lord could not be conceived as creator, as he could not become active if he were destitute of the potentiality of action"³. This *maya* or causal potentiality (lit. seed) has for its substratum or support the highest Lord, and is denoted by the term 'avyakta' (unmanifested)⁴. It is this very *maya* of the supreme Lord which in the scriptures has sometimes been designated as 'akasha', and sometimes as 'akshara' (indestructible)⁵. What has been called Prakriti in the Shruti and Smriti is this *maya* itself, and the names and forms

1 Thibaut's Introduction to his translation of The Vedanta-Sutras with the commentary of Shankara on them, p. p. XVII-XVIII.

See also Mr. A. Gough's Philosophy of the Upanishads, p. p. 239 ff.

2 SBG. Upodghata.

3 SBS. I. 4. 3 (Thibaut's Trans.).

4 Ibid. and SBG. XII. 3.

5 SBS. I. 4. 3; I. 2, 22.

which belong to the self of the omniscient Lord, as it were, and which constitute the seed of the entire phenomenal world and cannot be defined as either real or unreal, are also the same as this maya¹. Prakriti, according to Shankara, is nothing but this maya of the Lord which is the causal potentiality of all the effects and has the three gunas as its constituents². It is the cause of the entire phenomenal world. It creates all bodies and sense-organs; and it is from this that the sixteen effects and seven cause-cum-effects originate³. Lord's maya composed of three gunas which is his self, as it were, is the origin and source of all objects⁴. It is called 'avyakta' for it cannot be described either as real or as unreal.⁵

This maya of Shankara should not, however, be mistaken for the Pradhana or Prakriti of Samkhya. Shankara has himself duly warned his reader against committing such a mistake⁶. The Prakriti of Samkhya is an independent entity. It exists in and by itself, and is affirmed to be as real as the purushas whose purpose and interests it is said to serve. The maya of Shankara, on the other hand, like that of the Vedic or Upanishadic literature, is of a parasitical nature. It is entirely dependent on and inseparable from the supreme Lord, and, as such, has no being of its own. Unlike the advocates of the Samkhya doctrine, Shankara has not admitted it as an independent entity⁷. As all power is non-different from its possessor, so also maya, being a power of Brahma is non-different from it⁸. As a matter of fact, nothing that exists or appears to exist is, in Shankara's Brahmanavada, different from Brahma. But by non-difference Shankara does not mean identity. As it has been pointed out by Vachaspati Mishra, the assertion of non-difference (ananyatva) is, with Shankara, only a denial of difference. It does not amount to the affirmation of identity⁹. Any way, maya to Shankara is primarily a power of Ishvara. It is that wonderful creative will of the Lord which has in it an inconceivable causal potentiality¹⁰. Shankara has taken special care to shew that the origin, etc., of this wonderful world, which is "differentiated by names and forms, contains many agents and enjoyers, is the abode of the fruits of actions, these fruits having their definite places, times and causes, and the nature of whose arrangement cannot even be conceived by the mind, cannot possibly proceed from anything else but a Lord possessing the

1 SBS. II. 1. 14.

3 SBG. XIII. 20.

5 SBS. I. 4. 3.

8 SBG. XIV. 27 (सा शक्तिः ब्रह्म एव शक्तिशक्तिमताः जनन्यत्वात्)

9 Bhamati, II. 1. 14, see also SLS. I. 24.

2 SBG. VII. 4; XIII. 19; XIII. 29.

4 Vide SBG. XIV. 3.

6 SBS. I. 4. 3.

7 Ibid.

stated (omniscience, omnipotence, etc.,) qualities; nor either from a non-intelligent pradhana, or from atoms, or from non-being, or from a being subject to transmigration....."¹.

Thus, in stating that the origin, etc., of the world cannot proceed from any being subject to transmigration, Shankara has categorically denied its subjectivity or origination from this or that finite being. And this along with his repeated assertions to the effect that it is the omniscient and omnipotent Lord who creates, sustains and destroys the universe through his mysterious maya, should serve as an eye-opener to all those persons who read solipsism or subjectivism in Shankara's Brahmvada and begin to view the world as an ordinary illusion according to it. A detailed exposition of the untenability of reading subjectivism in it will be taken up in the next chapter. What presently concerns us is to note the fact that the causal potentiality of the world, according to Shankara, is maya, and that this maya has for its locus the almighty Lord, and none else inferior to Him. No doubt, Shankara has, at places, spoken of the maya of a magician too², meaning thereby, of course, something unintelligible, something mysterious, something false; but such maya of a finite being he has never exalted to the status of the world-creating maya of the omnipotent Lord. The maya of a magician, or of even a heavenly being, cannot be viewed as being beginningless and endless; but the world-creating maya of Shankara is as beginningless and eternal as is its wielder, the omnipresent Lord³. Taken in this sense, therefore, maya should be treated as an ontological concept rather than as a psychological or psychical entity. No doubt, Shankara regards it and its products as unreal; but that does not affect its ontological status. In the first place, by the unreality of empirical objects, or of their cause, the primal maya, he does not mean, as we have already seen, absolute non-existence, but something anirvachaniya, i. e., something which can neither be defined as real in the sense in which Brahma is real, nor as unreal in the sense of being altogether non-existent. Secondly, the world-creating maya has no finite mind or individual for its locus. The finite minds are as much a creation of this maya as is the objective world. What is itself created through it cannot account for its prior existence which is undoubtedly implied by the very fact of its being a primal creative agency. Whatever really be the ontological status of maya and of its products, which have also sometimes been designated as maya, it is certainly not the same as that of our psychic

1 SBS. I. 1. 2 (Thibaut's Trans.-the words within brackets are mine).

2 Vide SBG. XIII. 26.

3 Ibid. XIII. 19.

states. Our psychic states, whether illusory or otherwise, are dependent on the creations of maya. Being the states of this or that finite mind they cannot claim the same sort of objective existence as the all-creating maya can rightly be said to have. So when Shankara calls maya unreal he does not mean to suggest that its existence is a mere mental existence, much less to say that it is merely illusory. While viewing it as a power of the all-pervading World-Spirit he has denied its subjectivity, and in denying its subjectivity he has set aside a necessary condition of its being illusory in the usual sense. Moreover, the distinction that Shankara has made between illusory and empirical existence is also a pertinent point that can be conveniently urged in support of the non-illusory status of maya. When the empirical objects are not recognized as illusory by him, how can he admit maya, their cause, to be an illusory something? The ontological status of a cause is certainly higher than that of its effects; and that it is so has been held by Shankara at least.

We have, of course, spoken of maya as a creative will of the Lord; but that too does not affect its objectivity for us. Our own will, no doubt, is a function of our mind and hence, as such, something subjective. But the same thing cannot be said about the mysterious will of God. In the first place, it is only figuratively that the worldcreating power or maya of the omnipotent Lord has been called a will. It is just like calling electricity a fluid, although we do not definitely know what, in-itself, it really is. We cannot help employing familiar terminology if we want to have any idea of things that are otherwise unintelligible. Secondly, the will of God cannot be a function of mind. For, mind, body, or senses the Lord is said to have none.¹ His prehension and movement, it has been maintained, are without hands and legs respectively. He sees without eyes, and hears without ears.² His ways are, in fact, literally inscrutable. His maya is called maya because it is an extremely enormous enigma, a veritable mystery, for us. It would cease to be maya if it could be grasped at all. It is maya because it baffles all our attempts to understand it. All the same we may say that it should be viewed as a nature of God, and not as a function of His mind; for, a mind distinct from His self will mean a sort of schism in His non-dual homogeneity avowed by the Vedas, the Upanishads, and Shankara alike. So, if maya is taken as will, it should be taken as an objective, and not as a subjective, will. It is as objective as is its wielder, the Lord. Moreover, the question whether maya

1 Shvet. Up. III. 19 and SB. on it.

2 Vide Shvet. Up. VI. 8, and SB. on it.

is a subjective or objective will is not of vital significance for us. For, so far as we are concerned, its effects are undoubtedly objective, and we never mistake them for our mental states. We may, no doubt, sometimes mistake a mental state of ours for an objective fact; but the reverse of it is probably never done. As a modern psychologist would say, our cognition of the worldly objects is peripherally, and not centrally, aroused. So also according to Shankara it is the result of sense-object-contact,¹ and is, thus, dependent on the objects known.² The objectivity of our sense-data, their externality to our psychic states, is as secure in Shankara's Brahma-vada as in any other non-subjectivistic school of thought. Shankara, as we have seen in chapter IV, does not deny to our internal and external sense-organs the parts they properly play in moulding our cognitions; but at the same time he is not prepared to ascribe to them the entire make-up of our percepts. So, to posit maya as the causal potentiality of the world does not deprive it (the world) of its empirical or pragmatic existence. For practical purposes the world continues to remain as palpable a fact on holding this view as it does on any other view divergent from it.

Whether we admit atoms, or posit Prakriti, or anything else of the sort, as the cause of the world, it is really a matter of our speculation only. Neither atoms, nor prakriti, nor even maya, can ever be directly perceived by us. So long as we continue to remain constituted as we actually are, it would be hoping against all hopes to unearth the ultimate mystery of creation. Such an assertion may probably injure the sense of pride in the modern man. But the prideless seer of the Nasadiya sukta of Rigveda seems to have gladly acquiesced in such a view when he frankly says: 'This creation (or created universe) from where arose, whether it was created or it was not created, (this) He alone who is its ruling Lord in the super-sky, may be knowing, or even He may not be knowing (it)'.³ Is it not then—in view of our inability to have a direct and definite cognition of the first factor of the long series of the world-process, and in view of our failure to account for it either on purely naturalistic lines or by positing two or more independent ultimate realities of 'antithetical or similar nature, as well as in view of the peculiar nature of the world which cannot be, strictly speaking, described as either absolutely real or as absolutely unreal, or illusory—the only reasonable course to view the creation as an effect of the mysterious maya of an omnipotent spiritual

1 SBS. II. 2. 28, 29.

2 SBS. I. 1. 4.

3 Rigveda; Nasadiya-sukta, X. 129. 7 (दृष्टं विसृजिह..... न वेद)

Being ? This view may not appeal to many of us, but it did appeal to Shankara, as it had done before him to the Vedic and Upanishadic sages.

VII Maya and Avidya

That in conformity with its original and most common usage Shankara has primarily spoken of maya as Ishvara's shakti (God's inscrutable power), and, as such, the primal causal potentiality of the creation of the world, we have adequately seen; but it cannot be denied that world has also sometimes been spoken of by him as being 'avidyatmaka' (consisting of avidya), 'avidya-kalpita (imagined by avidya), 'avidya-pratyupasthapita' (presented by avidya), and so on.¹ It is, therefore, not improper to raise the question: "Are maya and avidya the same thing or different things with Shankara ?" Opinion, however, seems to be divided with regard to the answer to this question. While Thibaut, on the one hand, seems to think that the terms maya and avidya are interchangeable in Shankara's philosophy,² Col. Jacob, on the other hand, is quite emphatic in asserting that "The word Maya is no-where used by Shankara as a synonym of Avidya..."³ As a matter of fact this difference of opinion with regard to maya and avidya seems to be present even among the scholars belonging to Shankara's own school of thought. While Shri Sarvajnamuni, the author of Sanksheshasharirakam, Shri Prakashananda, the author of Siddhantamuktavali, and Shri Vidyaranya, the author of Vivaranaprimeyasamgraha, for example, see no difference between maya and avidya or Ajnana,⁴ in Panchadashi and Prakatartha-Vivarana, and elsewhere too, some distinction between them seems to have been definitely made. In Prakatartha-vivarana maya has been described as the beginningless and indescribable origin of all objects which is associated with (the infinite) cosmic consciousness, while avidya is viewed as a finite unit of this cosmic maya.⁵ So also in Panchadashi Maya is held to be the upadhi (adjunct) of Ishvara, while avidya is maintained to be an adjunct of the finite individual souls (jivas) only⁶

1 Vide SBS. II. 1. 14.

2 Vide Thibaut's remark, "Brahma is associated with a certain power called Maya or Avidya to which the appearance of this entire world is due." (Introduction to his translation of The Vedanta-sutra, p. XXV).

3 Intro. Vedanta-Sara, preface, p. V.

4 Vide—Sanksheshasharirakam I. 20; Siddhantamuktavali, p. 39; and also shloka 38 [ब्रह्माज्ञानाज्जगज्जन्म]; Vivaranaprimeyasamgraha, Sutra 1, Varnaka 1, p. p. 133—36.

5 Vide SLS. I. 29.

6 Vide Panchadashi, I. 15—17.

Now, coming to Shankara we must admit that he has at no place tried clearly to bring out the difference between the meanings of the terms *maya* and *avidya* so frequently used by him, and that at places he has also spoken of the effects of *maya*, viz., the objective world, as being *avidyat-makā*, *avidyadhyaropita* (superimposed by *avidya*), and in similar other terms.¹ But we are, at the same time, almost quite certain that no-where in his vast works he has attributed *avidya* to his *Ishvara* or God. *Avidya*, in other words, has never been spoken of as a *shakti* of the Lord, as *maya* has repeatedly been. Shankara has often called his *Ishvara* a *mayin* (i. e., one who is possessed of *maya*); but not even once he has designated Him as *avidyavan* (i. e. one who has *avidya*). On the other hand, he has repeatedly described Him as *sarvajna*, *sarvavit* (omniscient), and by means of other such terms.² All these assertions of Shankara show that *Maya* is not a synonym of *Avidya* for him. If we substitute the word '*avidya*' for '*maya*' in the sentences in which it has been used by him they definitely get deprived of their special significance. *Ishvara*, the omniscient Lord of the universe cannot be said to be subject to *avidya*. To view Him as such would be self-contradictory. The creation and sustenance of the world which are attributed to Him imply extraordinary knowledge, and not *avidya*, in Him. Whosoever ever creates anything intentionally creates it knowingly, and never through ignorance or delusion. The magic of a magician may delude us, the spectators; but it certainly does not originate from the delusion or ignorance of the magician, nothing to say of not causing delusion to him. "Just as a magician", Shankara has rightly maintained, "is never affected by the *maya* produced by himself..... similarly *Ishvara* also remains ever untouched by his own *maya*, the world".³ But the same thing cannot be said of one who is associated with *avidya*. To say that a person who is under the influence of *avidya* is not affected by it would apparently be a self-contradictory statement. The world-creating *maya* of Shankara, therefore, cannot be said either to be the *avidya* of his *Ishvara*, or, to be the same as the *avidya* of individual persons.⁴ No doubt, Shankara has used the word *maya*, as it is apparent from the above stated quotation from his commentary on the *Brahma-sutras*, for its products, the worldly objects, also,⁵ and it is, in fact, not only in conformity with his own view of the relation between a cause and

1 SBS. IV. 3; 14; III. 2. 15, 11; II. 3. 40; II. 1. 9; SB. Shvet. Up, Intro.; SB. Mund. Up. III. 2. 7, 8.

2 SBS. I. 1. 3.

3 SBS. II. 1. 9.

4 Compare SLS. I. 7 (जीवाश्रितादविद्यानिवहाद्भिन्ना मायैव ईश्वराश्रिता प्रपञ्चकारणम्)

5 SB, Mand. Karika, I, 17 (प्रपञ्चकार्यं मायामात्रम्)

its effect, but also in keeping with the secondary usage of the term *maya* in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the other scriptures to which reference has already been made in this very chapter. And that these effects of *maya* are also sometimes spoken of as being *avidyatamaka*, or due to *avidya*, is also what we have already admitted. So we are necessarily called upon to see the right significance of such words as *avidyatamaka*, *avidyadhyaropita*, etc. If the world is really an effect of God's mysterious *maya*, and not a fanciful creation of our own erroneous imagination, and if God's *maya* cannot be viewed as his *avidya* or ignorance, what is then, it may be justly asked, the sense in calling it *avidyatmaka* ?

Now, while trying to search out in Shankara's works an answer to this question we have to bear in mind his well-known distinction between the *vyavaharika* and *paramarthika* stand-points, and to remember that it is only from the latter point of view that the world or *maya* has been declared to be unreal by him. From the *vyavaharika* or empirical point of view its phenomenal reality, as we have seen, is as good a fact with Shankara as with us. So from one point of view, viz., the higher or *paramarthika*, Shankara may be rightly said to have called the world *avidyatmaka*, while from the other point of view, viz., *vyavaharika* or empirical, the same world, it can be said, has been held to be an effect of the omnipotent God's mysterious *maya*. And if so explained the apparent inconsistency involved in Shankara's view of the world as being both *avidyatmaka* and an effect of God's *maya* gets at once dissolved.

Moreover, the world may be said to be *avidyatmaka* in another way also. The word *avidya* is composed by adding the syllable 'a' to the word 'vidya', which mean 'not' and 'knowledge' respectively. So the composite word *avidya* may be taken to mean either lack of knowledge, or erroneous knowledge, or something other than knowledge.¹ We cannot, of course, say that there is lack of knowledge in God or that He possesses erroneous knowledge; but there seems to be nothing wrong in viewing His *maya* as well as its effects as something other than knowledge. In fact, to conceive *maya* as an adjunct or power of God is to view it as something distinguishable, though not separable, from Him. So, if knowledge, or consciousness, is held, as Shankara holds it to be, as constituting the essential nature of God, *maya* has got to be viewed as something other than it, that is, as *avidya*, and its effects as being *avidyatmaka*. But then it has also got to

1 Vide Diwan Chand; Short studies in the Upanishads, p. p. 31—32; also SB. Isha Up., 9 (विद्यायाः अग्न्या अविद्या)

be borne in mind that so to view avidya is not to take it in a psychological or epistemological sense. Taken in epistemological or psychological sense avidya, as we have seen, is incompatible with God's omniscience. If maya and its effects are at all to be viewed as being avidya and avidy-atmaka respectively, it is only in an ontological sense that they can be so viewed.

There is, however, a definite sense, suggested by Shankara himself, in which an individual's avidya (nescience or ignorance) may be said to be a cause of the world as it exists for him. In the opinion of Shankara a person in his essential nature is the same as Brahma, the Pure and Perfect Bliss. But owing to his beginningless ignorance or nescience he identifies himself with his mind, etc., the creations of maya, and so thinks himself to be a finite person, an agent as well as an enjoyer.¹ And this leads him to perform good and bad deeds which result in his birth, death, happiness and suffering, etc., and thus keeps him bound down to this world.² In this way his avidya or ignorance of his own essential nature becomes the cause of the world,³ or rather of his bondage in the world, which continues only so long as he continues through ignorance to identify himself with his mind and other adjuncts. It is only thus that avidya taken in its epistemological sense may be said to have been viewed by Shankara as a cause of our world. So we may conclude that Maya in its primary sense is not with Shankara the same as avidya taken in its usual epistemological sense, and that when the effects of maya are called by him the products of avidya, either the word avidya is taken in the sense of something other than vidya or knowledge, and not in the sense of absence or falsity of knowledge (ignorance, in the strict sense), or, if it is taken in its epistemological sense of erroneous knowledge, it has been held to be the cause of individual persons' bondage in the world and not of the common and objective phenomenal world.

VIII The Locus or Support of Avidya—So far as the question of the object of avidya is concerned there seems to be no difference of opinion among scholars belonging to Shankara's school of thought; for, it is Brahma, or one's Ultimate Self, which is held by all to be this object. But the question of the locus (ashraya) of avidya is a matter of great

1 Vide SBS. II. 3. 40.

2 Ibid. II. 3. 30 (यावदेव चायं बुद्ध्युपाधिसम्बन्धस्तावज्जीवस्य जीवत्वं संसारित्वं च)

3 Vide SB. Kena Up. Intro. (संसारबीजमज्ञानं कामकर्मप्रवृत्तिकारणम्)

SBS. IV. 2. 8 (मिथ्याज्ञाननिमित्तश्च बन्धः)

dispute, and the scholars have divided themselves into two main groups. There are some who hold that the same pure Brhama is both the object and locus of avidya;¹ whereas there are others according to whom the ajnana or avidya has not pure consciousness or Brahma, but jiva or individual soul, for its locus or support.² Of course, there are difficulties involved in holding either of these views. To take up the greatest difficulty involved in the first view it may be pointed out that it seeks to make incompatible things compatible. There being between pure consciousness and ajnana the same sort of antinomy as there is between light and darkness, it is beyond our comprehension to see how they can exist together. So also against the second view it has been seriously urged that it involves the logical flaw of anyonyashraya (Inter-dependence or Petitio Principii), in so far as it makes avidya reside in a jiva which itself is said to owe its jivahood (individuality) to avidya. How can avidya have for its locus a jiva which does not exist as such before its association with avidya itself ? This difficulty, however, is not so insurmountable as the first one. The propounders of this view have tried to overcome it by means of the analogy of a tree and its seed.³ Apparently a tree cannot come into being without its seed exactly as a seed cannot be conceived without there being a tree to produce it. All the same the seeds and the trees are both there. Similarly, it has been said, the individual soul and its avidya or ajnana have been there from beginning-less time.

Now, so far as Shankara himself is concerned he seems to hold, we may say, the jivas, and not Brahma, to be the locus of 'avidya.' And it is quite apparent from the answer which he has given to the question 'whose is this ignorance ?'. For example, in his commentary on Brahma-sutra IV. 1. 3 he has answered this question by saying 'It is of you who put this question' (yastvam prichchhasi tasya te). Similarly in his commentary on Shrimadbhagavadgita Shankara has raised the same question and has answered it exactly in the same way when he opines that 'Avidya belongs to that very person in whom it appears' or 'he who sees it has it.'⁴ If you ask: 'In whom does avidya appear (kasya drishyate iti) ?', Shankara would say that this question is meaningless. For, if avidya appears to

1 SLS. I. 7, p. 126 (शुद्धब्रह्माश्रयविषयमेकमेवाज्ञानं)

2 Ibid. p. 128 (नाज्ञानं शुद्धचैतन्याश्रयं किन्तु जीवाश्रयं)

Ibid. I. 5., p. 78 (ब्रह्मैव जीवाश्रितयाविद्यया विषयीकृतं)

3 See Bhamati I. 1. 1 (बीजाङ्कुरवदनादिस्वात्)

4 SBG. XIII. 2 (यस्य दृश्यते तस्यैव)

you, or you see avidya, you must be seeing its possessor or locus also.¹ This answer of Shankara, though not very definitely worded, seems to be clear enough to suggest that he regarded the individual souls, and not Brahma, as the locus of avidya. That this is the view of Shankara with regard to the question under consideration is made further clear when we find him describing avidya as 'svanubhavagamyā' and 'svashraya' simultaneously.² The word 'svanubhavagamyā' means something which is, or can be, experienced by one's own self, and the word 'svashraya' means something which has one's own self for its support or locus. Now, in so far as Brahma, in view of its nature as pure consciousness, cannot be said to be having an experience of avidya, it is the individual soul alone which can be maintained to have been meant by Shankara as being its support or locus. For in the case of an individual self or soul the experience of avidya in the form 'I do not know this, I do not know that' can be rightly said to be a standing fact. That an individual soul, and not Brahma is, according to Shankara, the locus of avidya is also evidenced by his account of adhyasa (superimposition) with which he has begun his most important work, the celebrated commentary on the Brahma-sutras. Let us therefore see what Shankara says about this superimposition or adhyasa.

IX Adhyasa or Superimposition :

The different schools of Indian philosophy have tried to define adhyasa in their own characteristic ways. For example, the Nyaya-Vaisheshika school has defined it as 'the superimposition of the attributes of something on something else'³. According to the Mimamsakas it is that 'error which results from the non-recognition of the difference between what is superimposed and what it is superimposed on'⁴, while in the opinion of the Madhyamika Buddhists it consists in "the fictitious assumption of attributes contrary to the nature of that thing on which something else is superimposed"⁵. But on taking a comprehensive view of these and other such definitions it can be rightly pointed out that superimposition essentially consists in an apparent presentation of the attributes of something in something else. Shankara has therefore defined it as "The apparent presentation, in the form of remembrance, to consciousness of some-

1 SBG. XII. 2 (दृश्यते चेदविद्या तदवन्तमपि पश्यसि)

2 SB. Shvet. Up. Sambandha-bhashya.

3 Vide SBS. Upodghata.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid. (Thibaut's Trans.).

thing previously observed, in some other thing"¹. "The clause 'in the form of remembrance' is added, the Bhamati remarks, in order to exclude those cases where something previously observed is recognised in some other thing or place"². Strictly speaking, the characteristic mark of superimposition, as it has been rightly pointed out by Shri Govindananda, the author of Ratnaprabha, a sub-commentary on Shankara's commentary on the Brahma-sutras, is "in this definition, 'the apparent presentation in some other thing' (lit , place)"³. To take an example of superimposition we may refer to the illusory perception of a snake in a rope. The snake is not actually present there. Of course a snake must have been previously observed, but at the moment concerned it is not in contact with any of our sense-organs. If at all it can at best be said to be existing only in the form of an impression in our mind. Its 'appearance there' is merely an apparent presentation to our consciousness in the place of the rope with which our sense-organ of sight is really in contact. In other words, the snake is, in this example, superimposed on the rope. According to Shankara superimposition is an undeniable fact. It is not only in the case of so many illusory perceptions, but also in the form of the false identification of our self with the not-self, that superimposition can be said to be a constituent phenomenon of our worldly experiences. In fact, it is the latter type of superimposition to which Shankara has decidedly given much greater prominence than to the former. And that it is so is quite evident from the fact that he has made it the starting-point of his famous commentary referred to above. There he has maintained that although it requires no proof to establish that the Ego and the Non-Ego (Thou), the subject and the object of knowledge, are as opposed to each other as light and darkness are, yet there is hardly any person who does not naturally confuse between them, or their attributes⁴. The mind, the body and the sense-organs cannot, according to Shankara, be our self; for they are as much an object of our knowledge as the tree, the table, and the like are rightly believed to be, while our self is their knower, the subject⁵. But who is there who does not naturally superimpose these objects, viz. the body, the senses and the mind, on his self, and his self on them ? "Attributes of the body are superimposed on the self, if a man thinks of himself (his

1 Ibid.

2 Vide SBS. (Thibaut's Trans.) Foot-notes, p. 4.

3 Ratnaprabha, I. 1. 1 (अत्र परब्रह्मसात् इत्येव लक्षणं)

4 Vide SBS. Upodghata.

5 Vide Upadeshasahasri, Prose-section, I. 34, 35.

self) as stout, lean, fair, as standing, walking, or jumping. Attributes of the sense-organs, if he thinks 'I am mute, or deaf, or one-eyed, or blind'. Attributes of the internal organ when he considers himself subject to desire, intention, doubt, determination, and so on. Thus the producer of the notion of the Ego (i. e. the internal organ) is superimposed on the interior self, which, in reality, is the witness of all modifications of the internal organ, and vice versa the interior self, which is the witness of everything, is superimposed on the internal organ, the senses, and so on. In this way there goes on this natural beginningless and endless superimposition, which appears in the form of wrong conception, is the cause of individual souls appearing as agents and enjoyers, and is observed by every one"¹. 'It is this superimposition which,' according to Shankara, 'the learned people call avidya'², and 'the annihilation of this superimposition or avidya, the cause of all evils, through the arousal of the knowledge of the universal self is, according to him, the aim of all the Upanishads'³. Shankara thus clearly shows that avidya, though natural and beginningless, exists only in the case of the ignorant individuals and not in the case of those persons who have realized their true Self, nothing to say of Brahma itself. It is, therefore the individual souls, and not Brahma, which, according to Shankara, must be held to be the locus or support of Avidya.

As we have already said superimposition, and hence avidya also, is, with Shankara, a stern fact, and not a matter of mere hypothesis; and as such it requires no proof or justification. All the same he is so open to reason that he has not thought it improper to raise and answer a possible objection with regard to the superimposition of the Not-Self on the self. "How is it possible", the objection runs, "that on the interior Self which itself is not an object there should be superimposed objects and their attributes ? For every one superimposes an object only on such other objects as are placed before him (i. e. in contact with his sense-organs), and you have said before that the interior Self which is entirely disconnected from the idea of the Thou (the Non-Ego) is never an object"⁴.

There are two points in this objection, one that the self is not an object of knowledge and the other that a thing is superimposed only on that thing which is in contact with some sense-organ of ours. As to the

1 SBS. I. 1. (Thibaut's Trans.).

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. (अस्यानर्थहेतोः.....आरभ्यन्ते)

4 Vide SBS. Upodghata (Thibaut's Trans.).

first point Shankara has maintained that 'the self is not altogether a non-object in so far as it appears to be an object in the consciousness of one's 'Ego', and manifests itself to all, for it is the most direct experience (of each and every sentient creature)'. And so far as the second point of the objection is concerned, Shankara has pointed out that 'it is not a rule that the thing on which something else is superimposed must necessarily be in contact with some sense-organ. The ether, for example, he has said, is not an object of sensuous perception, all the same the persons of childlike mind do superimpose on it dark-blue colour, etc.'¹

Whatever we may think to be the real worth of this argument it will not matter much for Shankara. For, in fact, it is not on the flimsy ground of arguments, but on the firm ground of common experience, that he has sought to take his stand here. According to him, as we have-already seen, superimposition is a stern fact to which everybody's every-moment experience may be said to testify. How and when it came to be there we have never been told by him. Superimposition is, indeed, an error; and an error, irrational something as it is, cannot admit of any rational explanation except that it must be deemed as being due to one's ignorance or avidya. But then avidya itself is something inexplicable. We cannot, of course, have recourse to vidya to account for it, simply because vidya and avidya are contradictory terms. Brahma also, for the same reason, cannot be said to be the support and cause of avidya; for to attribute avidya to it, in whatever way it may be, would mean to contradict its own essential nature of pure Being, pure Bliss and pure Consciousness. If we say avidya is the cause of avidya, our assertion would either involve the fallacy of *Petitio Principii* or that of *Argumentum ad Infinitum*, and in either case avidya will ever stand unexplained. The origin of avidya can certainly not be traced to the individual souls. For, in the first place, it is the avidya of the individual souls themselves which we are out to seek an explanation or origin of. Secondly, to trace the origin of avidya to the individual souls is to put the cart before a horse. An individual soul would not be an individual soul if avidya, in some form, were not already with it. What can be viewed as a logical consequent of avidya cannot rationally be treated as an antecedent or explanation of it. Strictly speaking, neither individual souls can be said to be the cause of avidya, nor avidya to be their cause. The individual souls cannot be said to be the cause of avidya, for avidya itself has got to be posited for them to be there; and

1 SBS. Upodghata (न तावदयं.....अध्यस्यन्ति)

avidya cannot be said to be the cause of individual souls not only because it cannot exist apart from them, but also because the very idea of their creation offends against our Moral Reason¹. Shankara, therefore, we may say, does not indulge in the explanation of this inexplicable avidya. It has, however, got to be postulated, for without it the standing stern fact of superimposition cannot otherwise be accounted for. And if it is postulated at all, it can be postulated as being beginningless only. Though avidya in itself appears to be something irrational, its postulation seems to meet quite a necessary demand of reason itself.

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¹ See Chapter VII ; the heading 'Karmavada'.

6

Misconceptions Set-aside

‘न स्वप्नादिप्रत्ययवज्जाग्रत्प्रत्यया भवितुमर्हन्ति’—शंकर

(ब्र.सू.भा. २.२.२६)

‘न वस्तुयाथात्म्यं पुरुषबुद्ध्यपेक्षं...वस्तुतन्त्रमेव तत्’—(ब्र. सू. भा. १.१.२)

‘सर्वो विकारः कारणव्यतिरेकेणानुपलब्धेः असन्’—शंकर

(गी. भा. २.१६)

Chapter 6

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SHANKARA'S BRAHMAVADA SET-ASIDE

I Is Shankara's Brahmvada Subjective Idealism ?

According to the doctrine called Subjective Idealism mind and mental states are the only reality in the world. There is nothing that is not mental or of the nature of mind. All that exists or appears to exist is dependent upon mind for its existence. There is nothing objective in the strict sense. Externality to percipient mind is a mere myth. In reality there is no world of external objects. The sensible objects or their qualities which are commonly believed to be the external causes or occasions of our sensations or perceptions there-of are reduced by a subjective idealist to mere mental existents or ideas. In the words of Berkeley, a well-known subjective-idealist, "Their esse is percipi."¹ "Berkeley," however, "stopped short of the full logical development of his position and admitted the existence of other minds and of the self, though in point of fact we have ideas of neither."² A true subjective idealist was indeed Hume who "ruthlessly pushed to its conclusion Berkeley's argument that a thing's existence consists of its being known, and came to rest in the position which is called Solipsism, a position which asserts that mental states are the only things that can be known to exist in the Universe."³ So also in India the Yogachara School of Buddhists, known as the Vijnana-vada School also, regarded the stream of ideas, or mental series, as the only reality. Like the western subjective idealists the Vijnanavadin Buddhists also deny the externality of objects to the mind that knows them. According to them there is nothing that exists outside the mind. Just as illusory objects and the objects of dreams only appear to be outside the

1 Fraser's Selections From Berkeley, p. 34.

2 Joad. Introduction to Modern Phil., p. 7. 3 Ibid. pp. 7-8.

mind but are not really so, similarly all the objects of waking life only appear to be external to mind, but actually are merely ideas of the mind itself.¹ In the words of Dr. Sinha, "Vasubandhu recognizes the reality of consciousness (vijñapti) only, which manifests non-existent objects like the illusory hair and double moon."² So also "Dharmakīrti reduces the so-called external material objects to sense-data which are nothing but sensations or cognitions (vijñāna)."³ Just as for Berkeley or Hume the existence of external things is unintelligible, so also for a Vijñānavādin Buddhist the existence of an external object can never be proved. As no quality of a so-called external object, it is held by a Vijñānavādin, can ever be proved as existing separately from or independently of its cognition, these qualities and their consciousness are, in point of fact, not different from each other. The non-difference of an object of knowledge from an act of it, it is said, follows from the fact of their invariably obtained simultaneity.⁴

Now, there is no evidence lacking as to that Shankara has sometimes compared the objects of the world to those of a dream-state.⁵ Especially in his commentary on Gaudapada's Mandukya-Karikas, Shankara, as it has been rightly observed by Dr. DasGupta, "seems again and again to emphasize the view that the objects perceived in waking experience are as false and as non-existent as objects of dream-experience."⁶ Moreover, it cannot also be denied that some writers who are commonly recognized as persons belonging to Shankara's own school of thought have openly propounded a doctrine which is essentially a form of subjective idealism, if not exactly the same as that of the Vijñānavādin Buddhists in India, or of Berkeley or Hume in the West. Prakāshananda, for instance, has, like Berkeley, advocated the view that the things exist only in perception. Like a Vijñānavādin-Buddhist he has questioned the capacity of the various means of knowledge, perception, etc., to establish the real objectivity of the so-called 'external' objects. In his opinion "There is no proof that cognition and cognised object are different. This universe, animate and inanimate, which appears in consciousness, is nothing but cognition."⁷ Just as a dream appears with the distinction between cognition and the objects cognized (but in reality there is no object apart from its cognition),

1 Vide SBS. II. 2. 28 (स्वप्नादि.....अवगम्यते)

2 AHIP. Vol. II, p. 377.

3 Ibid.

4 SBS. II. 2. 28. (सहोपलम्भनियमात्)

5 AP., 56; Praudhanubhūti. 9.

6 HIP. Vol. II. pp. 28-29.

7 Siddhanta-muktavali, 18 (Eng. Trans. by Col. Arthur Venis).

so also this world of our waking consciousness of animate and inanimate objects is cognition or consciousness alone.¹ In Advaita Vedanta terminology the doctrine according to which the objects are said to exist only in and through perception is called *drishti-srishti-vada*, and is sometimes erroneously attributed to Shankara himself, mainly because he has at places compared the objects of our waking life to those of dreams, and also because persons like Prakashananda who are believed to be his bonafide followers have propounded it. And the fact that Gaudapadacharya, who is generally recognized as the teacher of Shankara's teacher, Govindananda, seems to have subscribed to this doctrine has also probably lent support to such a view.

But, as a matter of fact, to view Shankara as a subjective idealist or solipsist is to do a great injustice to him. 'Not only does Shankara distinguish his position from that of subjective idealism, but he also emphasises the distinction between the states of waking and dream.'² As it has been rightly observed by Dr. Sinha, "Gaudapada tends towards subjectivism, though he is an absolutist, but Shankara is uncompromising in his anti-subjectivism. He refutes *Vijñānavāda* and establishes the empirical reality of external objects of waking perception."³ And his refutation of *Vijñānavāda* is so clear and emphatic that it should leave no doubt, in the mind of its reader, about his being an antisubjectivist. It is, therefore, desirable to have a bird's-eye-view of this refutation, and thus to judge for ourselves Shankara's correct position with regard to it.

II Shankara's refutation of *Vijñānavāda* :

In the first place 'the non-existence of external things', Shankara holds, 'cannot be maintained because we are conscious of external things. In every act of perception we are conscious of some external thing corresponding to the idea, whether it be a post or a wall or a piece of cloth or a jar, and, that, of which we are conscious cannot but exist'.⁴ Shankara, who believes in the possibility of knowledge of external things, and regards perception as a valid means of it, cannot bear the idea that the testimony of perception be so undeservedly disregarded as it has been done by the *Vijñānavādin*-Buddhist. He holds that if the objects were conceived to forego their own nature as known by means of *Pramāṇas* (sources of knowledge), then all sources of knowing them would, *ipso facto*, vanish.⁵

1 Ibid. 19.

2 Radhakrishnan. p. Vol. II. p. 498.

3 AHIP. Vol. II. p. 535.

4 SBS. II. 2. 28 (Thibaut's Eng. Trans., p. 420).

5 SB. Br. Up. II. 1. 20.

Secondly, the fact "That the outward thing exists apart from consciousness", Shankara asserts, "has necessarily to be accepted on the ground of the nature of consciousness itself. Nobody when perceiving a post or a wall is conscious of his perception only, but all men are conscious of posts and walls and the like as objects of their perceptions....., even those who contest the existence of external things bear witness to their existence when they say that what is an internal object of cognition appears like something external..... If they did not themselves at the bottom acknowledge the existence of the external world, how could they use the expression "like something external" ? No one says Vishnumitra appears like the son of a barren mother".¹ Here Shankara has taken up a critical analysis of the consciousness of the appearance of external things, and has pointed out that it cannot be explained except on the ground of admitting externality as an actual fact.

The non-existence of objects external to consciousness, Shankara goes on to add, does not 'follow from the fact of the ideas having the same form as the objects; for if there were no objects the ideas could not have the forms of the objects, and the objects are actually apprehended as external.....For the same reason (i. e. because the distinction of thing and idea is given in consciousness) the invariable concomitance of idea and thing has to be considered as proving only that the thing constitutes the means of the idea, not that the two are identical'.² One of the arguments of the Vijnanavadin Buddhist to prove the non-externality of objects is to show the invariable concomitance of an idea and the object of which it is an idea. This invariable concomitance, of course, Shankara does not question, nor can it be reasonably questioned. For the existence of objects can certainly not be known except by being known. But it does not mean that the known objects are identical with the ideas or knowledge of themselves. The invariable concomitance of seeing and light does not prove either that seeing is light or that light is seeing. Colour of an object cannot be experienced apart from its extension, but on that account we cannot hold colour to be the same thing as extension. Just as the colour and extension of an object are not confused with each other simply because they are given as distinct in our consciousness of them, so also an object and its idea or consciousness, Shankara holds, should not be treated as being identical, simply because their distinction is also clearly experienced by us. Their invariable concomitance, Shankara believes,

1 SBS. II. 2. 28 (Thibaut's Trans., p. 421).

2 Ibid. (Thibaut's Trans., p. 422).

can be more reasonably explained by regarding the object as the cause of its idea; and this hypothesis, we believe, is certainly more plausible than its rival hypothesis framed by the Vijñanavadin. In any case Shankara has made it quite clear that he is not a subscriber to the subjective-idealist's view that things are our ideas only and do not exist outside our mind.

"Moreover", Shankara has further added, "when we are conscious first of a pot and then of a piece of cloth, consciousness remains the same in the two acts, while what varies are merely the distinctive attributes of consciousness..... The difference of the one permanent factor (from the two or more varying factors) is proved throughout by the two varying factors, and vice versa the difference of the latter (from the permanent factor) by the presence of the one (permanent factor). Therefore thing and idea are distinct".¹ It means that if cognition and its objects were really identical and not different things, the former could never afford to part with any of the latter. But the fact is quite otherwise. For, while our consciousness as such remains the same in our being conscious of this and that object, these objects of our consciousness change from time to time. And this engenders in our mind the belief that the objects are not a part and parcel of consciousness, but exist independently of our knowledge of them. And this shows that the objects neither constitute the essential nature of consciousness, nor are they nothing except our cognition of them.

"The objects known in waking life", Shankara continues to say, "are not like those of a dream"², for the two differ in their essential nature. In the first place, the dream objects, are sublated by the experience of waking life, while the objects of waking life are never likewise sublated.³ Moreover, the visions of a dream are grounded in memory, whereas the objects of waking life are directly perceived, and the difference between remembrance and perception is clearly vouchsafed by the direct experience of every one of us. In perception the object perceived is present before us, but it is absent when we remember it. And it is not proper for a sane person to deny his own direct experience.⁴ Now, if the

1 SBS. II. 2. 28 (Thibaut's Trans., p. 422), See also SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 7

(यो हि येषु भवति स तद्व्यतिरिक्तो भवत्येव)

2 SBS. II. 2. 29 (न स्वप्नादिप्रत्ययवज्जाग्रत्प्रत्यया भवितुमर्हन्ति ।)

3 Ibid.

4 SBS. II. 2. 29; (for the criticism of Vijñanavada see also SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 7.)

objects of a waking state cannot be said to be groundless for fear of contradicting one's own direct experience, they can certainly not be shown to be so through their comparison with the visions of a dream-state. What cannot belong to a thing by virtue of its own nature, cannot belong to it on account of its resemblance in some respect with something else. Fire which is experienced as hot in itself would not be rendered cold due to its having certain points in common with water.¹

These clear and pointed remarks of Shankara against Vijñānavāda serve to dispel all our doubts about his not being a subscriber to subjectivism, or *Drishti-srishti-vāda*, according to which "things exist only when they are perceived and dissolve into nothingness as soon as we cease to perceive them"². *Drishti-srishti-vāda* is pure and simple solipsism, which, as it has been rightly pointed out by Prof. Hiriyanna, "is repugnant to thought, and really stultifies all effort at philosophising"³. No doubt, Prakāśhananda, 'who is believed to have lived in the latter half of the sixteenth century'⁴, and to have belonged to Shankara's own school of thought, seems to have subscribed to such a philosophical doctrine. But that does not warrant us to say that Shankara also was a subscriber to it. One may or may not agree with Dr. DasGupta when he says that his "doctrine of *Drishti-srishti* is apparently unknown to the earlier vedantic works"⁵, but so far as Shankara is concerned, it can definitely be said that he was not, for one, a believer in it. How can one who could level such a trenchant criticism against the *Vijñānavāda-Buddhism* and who laid so much stress on the distinction not only between the vision of a dream and the objects of one's waking life, but also between knowledge and the objects known⁶, be a *Vijñānavādin* or a subjective idealist, or a solipsist himself ?

In his commentaries on *Brahma-sūtras*, II. 2, 28 and II. 2, 29, Shankara has made his position so clear and convincing that even Dr. DasGupta who is elsewhere inclined to believe Shankara to be in some measure a subscriber to the views of a subjective idealist, cannot but admit that here at least he has assigned to the world of objects "an existence of some sort outside individual thought"⁷. To Dr. DasGupta, it appears,

1 Vide SBS. II. 2. 29.

3 Outlines of Indian Phil. p. 362.

5 HIP. Vol. II. p. 17.

6 SBS. II. 2. 28 (अर्थज्ञानयोर्भेदः)

7 HIP. Vol. II. p. 29,

2 HIP. Vol. II. p. 16.

4 HIP. Vol. II. p. 17,

Shankara's view seems to have undergone a change here. He says : "If the commentary on Gaudapada's Karika be admitted to be a work of Shankara, then it may be urged that Shankara's view had undergone a change when writing a commentary on Brahma-Sutra, for in the commentary on Gaudapada's Karika he seems again and again to emphasize the view that the objects perceived in waking experience are as false and as non-existent as objects of dream experience.....but in the commentary on Brahma-Sutra the world of objects and sensibles is seen to have an existence of some sort outside individual thought".¹

But with all reverence for Dr. DasGupta and his learning I cannot persuade myself to see quite eye to eye with him here. No doubt, views do undergo change, and it does not involve too much presumption on one's part to account for really different views of a writer by attributing their difference to a genuine change in them. But before such a hypothesis is framed to explain a seeming difference it is but desirable to ascertain if it is really a fact that we are seeking to explain. It is, in fact, one of the essential conditions of a valid hypothesis so to do. We have, therefore, to see if there is really difference or opposition between what Shankara has maintained in his commentary on the Brahma-Sutras and what he has said in his commentary on Gaudapada's Karikas.

Dr. DasGupta, we admit, is perfectly right when he maintains that in his commentary on Gaudapada's Karikas Shankara speaks of the unreality of the objective world and illustrates it with the help of the similes or examples of dream experiences and the like. But it is not a peculiarity of his commentary on the Karika only. Nothing to say of his other works, even in his commentary on the Brahma-Sutras themselves there is no dearth of such statements both before and after his seemingly realistic remarks made in his commentary on Sutras II. 2. 28 and 29. For instance, in his commentary on Sutra, IV. 3. 14 our empirical life has been likened by him to our behaviour in a dream state which holds good only prior to the moment of one's waking.² Perception and the other means of knowledge pertaining to practical or empirical life, it is maintained, operate only so long as true knowledge has not dawned. But they cease to be operative in the case of those who come to possess the right knowledge. For where there is no duality at all there is no room for the functioning

1 HIP. Vol. II, p. p. 78-29.

2 SPS. IV. 3. 14 (प्राक्प्रबोधात्स्वप्नव्यवहारवत्तदुपपत्तिः)

of perception, and the like¹. All the names and forms (which characterize the world of our practical life and which are given to us by perception and the other means of empirical knowledge) are, it is said, superimposed (on Brahma) by Nescience; and they all get dissolved on the realization of one's true nature (svarupapratipattih)². The experience of the multifarious existence is due to wrong knowledge. It is just like the experience of a dream-state that it appears to remain or proceed unimpeded.³ This distinction, however, does not exist in Reality.⁴ In Reality there is nothing like an effect. All effects are names only. They are all unreal⁵. "The entire complex of phenomenal existence is considered as true (only) as long as the knowledge of Brahma being the self of all has not arisen; just as the phantoms of a dream are considered to be true until the sleeper wakes"⁶. The world is an illusion, and not really real.⁷ The variety of its objects is just like that of the dream-experiences.⁸ These assertions, I think, are quite sufficient to show that even in his commentary on the Brahma-Sutras, both prior and posterior to the sutras II. 2. 28 and 29, Shankara has declared the world to be unreal and has also compared it with dream-experiences.⁹ How can, then, we say that Shankara, the commentator on Gaudapada's Karikas had changed his views while writing a commentary on the Brahma-sutras ? If what has been maintained by him in his commentary on Sutra, II. 2. 29 is something different from what he has maintained in his commentary on Karikas, it is also equally at variance with what he says elsewhere, at so many places, in his commentary on the Brahma-sutras themselves. If the views expressed in the commentary on Sutras II. 2. 28 and 29 do not tally with the views held in his commentary on the Karikas, they also do not tally with those entertained in the commentaries on so many other Sutras themselves. So we are not entitled to say that the view of the commentator on the Karikas had undergone a change while he was writing his commentary on

1 SBS. IV. 3. 14 (अप्रबुद्धविषये प्रत्यक्षादिव्यवहारंप्रबुद्धविषये तदभावम्)

2 Ibid. (अविद्याध्यारोपितनामरूपप्रविलय.....)

3 SBS. II. 1. 9 (मिथ्याज्ञानप्रतिबद्धो.....स्वप्नवदव्याहृतः.....)

4 SBS. II. 1. 14 (न त्वयम् विभागः परमार्थतोऽस्ति)

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid. (Thibaut's Trans.).

7 SBS. II. 1. 22 (भ्रान्तिः संसारो न तु परमार्थतः)

8 SBS. II. 1. 23 (स्वप्नदृश्यभाववैचित्र्यवत्)

9 For further evidence reference may also be made to SBS. II. 1, 27-28; II, 3. 7; III. 2. 11, 12 and 15,

the Brahma-sutras; for in his commentary on the Brahma-sutras themselves we find the same view echoed again and again.

As a matter of fact Shankara never seems to be tired of comparing the world and its contents with the objects of a dream-state. But this comparison, it can confidently be said, is not intended by him to be taken literally. In fact Shankara has himself warned his readers against a literal interpretation of such comparisons and similes employed by him. In the words of Max Muller "An illustrative simile, he says very truly, is meant to illustrate one point only, not all; otherwise it would not be a simile"¹. "It is not a rule that a parallel instance should be absolutely similar to what it is intended to exemplify"². Parallel instances are every where taken in the intended sense only³. And that, when the world is said to be similar to a dream-experience, the intended meaning of Shankara is not to declare its mental existence becomes quite clear if we look to his differentiation between them. While a person is in a dream-state, he says, his visual and other sense-organs cease functioning and are unified in the mind⁴. A dream is defined by him as that state in which a person who has withdrawn his sight from the experiences of waking life sees in his mind sights similar to those of waking life itself⁵. Nothing to say of his other works this distinction between waking and dream-experiences has been made by Shankara even in his commentary on Gaudapada's Karikas themselves. There he says that the difference of the visions of a dream from the objects of waking-experience consists in the former being mental (lit. internal) and clouded (vague or not clear).⁶ Were the experiences of dreams and waking life exactly alike, the former could not be sublated by the latter. For, as Shankara says, darkness cannot dispel darkness.⁷

Thus, it becomes clear that Shankara's comparison of the objects of waking life with the visions of a dream-state was never intended to indicate their subjective or mental existence. Nowhere, and not even once, we find him saying that the objects of our common experience are mere mental states as dreams are. On the other hand, he has definitely main-

1 TLVP., p. 43.

2 SBS. I. 2. 21 (नहि दृष्टान्तदार्ष्टान्तिकयोरत्यन्तसाम्येन भवितव्यमिति नियमोऽस्ति)

3 Vedanta-Kaustubha, III. 2. 27 (सर्वत्र विवक्षितांशमात्रेण दृष्टान्ता उपादीयन्ते)

4 SB. Prashna Up. IV. 2.

5 Ibid. IV. 1.

6 SB. Mand. Karika, II. 4 (अस्तः स्थानात्संवृतत्वेन च स्वप्नदृष्टयानां भावानां

आपद्दृश्येभ्यो भेदः)

7 SBG. IV. 18.

tained that the cognition of the objects of waking life invariably involves the activity of one's sense-organs which is not involved in the experiences of dreams. And this activity of the sense-organs, according to him, depends upon the external objects or the so-called sense-data.¹ Unlike a subjectivist he has never confused between the known and the knowing of it. The known, he has rightly observed, is that which is obtained by means of an act of knowing.² Perception, according to Shankara, implies the existence of the object perceived; but not existence, its perception. In the words of Prof. Hiriyanna, "To be perceived is for him to be, and his theory may therefore be described as an inversion of the one associated in western philosophy with the name of Berkeley."³

What is, then, the point, it may be asked, which Shankara intended to illustrate by means of the simile of dreams? If the empirical objects of waking life are not similar to the visions of a dream in respect of being mere mental experiences, in what other possible respect can they be said to have been compared with them?

Now, in order to get an answer to the above question we have to look to the nature of dreams other than that of their being subjective states of one's mind. Besides being merely mental existents the dreams, we know, are of very short duration. They appear to be real when they are actually experienced; but are not really so. For, on waking, they get sublated and are thus known to be unreal. That dreams are changing objects of our consciousness can also not be denied. Now, if we represent these characteristics of dreams by the letters x, y and z and the fact of their being subjective states of mind by the letter 'a', and express the situation of their analogy to the objects of our waking consciousness in the form of a formal argument, it will take the form of a disjunctive syllogism like this. The objective world is similar to dream experiences either in respect of a, or x, or y, or z. They are, however, not similar in respect of a. Therefore they must be similar in other respects. This is undoubtedly a formally valid syllogism; but in order to test its material validity we have to see if the other characteristics of dreams are the characteristics of the contents of our empirical experiences as well and whether it was really in respect of these other characteristics that Shankara held the two types of experiences to be alike.

1 SBS. I. 4. 3 (अर्थाधीनत्वाद्विन्द्रियव्यापारस्य)

2 SB. Kena Up: I. 4 (विदितं नाम यद्विदिक्रिययातिशयेनाप्तम्)

3 Outlines of Indian Phil., p. 351.

Now, so far as the point of their being changing objects of our consciousness is concerned, we have already seen in the preceding chapter that the world and its contents are really of changing nature and that they are also objects of our knowledge, distinct from their consciousness or the subject of their knowledge. So, we can very well say that the world of waking experience is undoubtedly similar to a dream-world in this respect, and that there was nothing wrong if Shankara compared them with regard to it.

The terms 'long' and 'short' are really relative terms. Any specific period of time, however long it may be, can be viewed as short if compared to time eternal. The life of, say, even a hundred years which really only few lucky human beings enjoy is in point of fact like a twinkling of an eye when compared to the long liege of life granted to our own planet earth; and the life of this earth is only a very small fraction of the life of the Sun; and even the life of sun is very short when compared to the life of a nebula; and that too is really too short if viewed in the light of the ever-enduring time. What wonder is it, then, if Shankara compared the objects of the world to the dream-experiences in this respect also. Of course, from our finite point of view the duration of the empirical common objects is considerably longer than that of dream-experiences. But this difference is only of degree and not of kind. The clear recognition of this fact is, indeed, necessary for the arousal of a really sincere aspiration after the life eternal. So long as people hold fast to the world they live in and do not clearly realise the ephemeral nature of it and of its gains, they cannot, Shankara believes, think in terms of Self-realization or attainment of immortality. As we shall see in chapter VII, the desire to know Brahma is engendered only when a person comes to feel the futility of seeking the full satisfaction of his ever-multiplying desires in and through the finite gains of the short-lived human life. To-day if a person is asked 'what is the most wonderful thing in the world?', he would name one of the so-called seven wonders of it. But when the same question was put to Yudhishtira he said: 'what greater wonder than this can there be that every-day so many persons enter into the jaws of death, and yet the remaining ones think in terms of ever staying here'¹. Our life is, indeed, short, and so is the case with all other things of this world. They are all objects of our consciousness much the same as the dream-experiences are, and hence they are, like them, unreal too.² But their

1 Mahabharata (अहृत्य.....किमाश्चर्यमितः परम्)

2 SB, Mand. Karika, II. 4 (दृश्यत्वमसत्यत्वं चाविशिष्टमुभयम्)

unreality, to Shankara, does not mean their subjectivity. Moreover, the world and its objects are said to be unreal from the ultimate point of view only. From the empirical or practical point of view their existence is as real a fact with him as with any anti-subjectivist.

III Some anti-subjectivistic features of Brahmvada :

Apart from what has been maintained here to show that Shankara's Brahmvada is not subjective idealism or solipsism, there are a few special features of it which also lend clear support to our view.

According to Subjective idealism the mental states or ideas are, as we have already seen, the most fundamental reality. No subjective idealist has ever denied the reality of mental states themselves. And in case one does so, no-body, I think, would view him as a subjective idealist. But in Shankara's Brahmvada what is mental has by no means a superior claim to reality than that of the non-mental. On the other hand, in it, a definitely inferior or secondary status has been assigned to mental states than to the extra-mental objects on which they are said to depend for their arousal (vastutantra).¹ And from the higher point of view mental states or ideas have been declared to be as unreal as any other content or constituent of the world.² This is what no subjective idealist or solipsist has ever done, or would ever do unless he sees no wrong in contradicting what he himself maintains. So even on the ground that Shankara has viewed the world as unreal it cannot be maintained that he is a subjective idealist; for, if he has denied reality to the objective facts of the world, he has also equally denied it to the mental states or ideas as well. So, if there is any ground to view him as a subjective idealist, there is, then, decidedly a stronger ground to declare him to be an anti-subjectivist also.

A thorough-going or consistent subjective idealist cannot, strictly speaking, distinguish between illusory and non-illusory experiences. For, as there is nothing external to mind or mental states according to him, the very ground on which the distinction between illusory and non-illusory or real experiences can reasonably be based is really removed by him. But Shankara, as we have already seen, has clearly distinguished between not only ultimate and empirical reality but also between empirical (vyavaharika) and illusory (pratibhasika) experiences. And this distinction which specially characterises his Brahmvada is, therefore, another anti-subjectivistic feature of it.

1 SBS. I. 1. 4.

2 SB. Mand. Up. 7 (कृत्स्वरूपविशेषेऽपि इतरेतरव्यभिचारात् असत्यत्वम्)

Another thing which forms a further feature of Shankara's Brahmadva and may be said to be anti-subjectivistic in nature is its account of the origin etc. of the world. According to it, as we have seen, it is Brahma with its mysterious power called maya which is the ultimate cause of not only the origin but also of the subsistence and desolution of the world, of which all the objects are said to have their fixed material and efficient causes.¹ But such a view of the world and its constituents is really incompatible with consistent subjectivism. For, a God-created and God-sustained world must necessarily be an objective world, and not a mere mental world, originating and existing in this or that individual person's mind only.

So, it can conveniently be concluded that Shankara's Brahmadva is far from being subjective idealism or solipsism, recognizing as it does a God, a God-created world, the difference between not only the waking and dream experiences but also between knowledge and the objects known, and so on. To view it as subjective idealism, therefore, is nothing but a gross misconception about it.

But from what has been maintained here it does not follow that Shankara has viewed the world and its contents as being really real. If to view Shankara's Brahmadva as subjective idealism is a misconception of it, to view it as realism is in no way a lesser misconception. But in point of fact, if Brahmadva has been wronged by being conceived as subjective-idealism, it has also been wronged by being interpreted as a philosophy in which 'the empirical objects or the emergent changes have been regarded as real objects'.² Whether it be under the pressure of realistic influences or due to an anxiety to satisfy critics, or for some other reason, evidence of smuggling realism into it is not at least wanting. Though the consensus of scholars' opinion still favours the observation that Shankara's main thesis 'consists of the view that Brahma alone is the ultimate reality, while everything else is false', as Dr. DasGupta has rightly observed, "yet at least one Indian scholar has sought to prove that Shankara's philosophy was realistic."³ And the scholar to whom Dr. DasGupta has referred is none other than Prof. Kokilleshwar Shastri, Vidyaratna, the author of 'An Introduction To Advaita Philosophy'. It is, therefore, desirable to consider here the arguments which he has advanced in order to justify his pro-realistic interpretation of Shankara's Brahmadva.

1 SB. Br. Up. I, 4. 10 (सर्वपदार्थानां नियतनिमित्तोपादानात्)

2 An Intro. to Advaita Phil., p. 130.

3 HIP. Vol. II., p. 2.

IV Prof. K. Shastri's Pro-realistic view of Shankara's Brahma-vada,

To begin with, Professor Kokileshwara Shastri has observed that Shankara recognizes ".....three distinct classes of objects. The first class includes in it such objects as are generally known as rabbit-horn (shasha-vishana); barren-woman's son (bandhyaputra); and sky-flower (akasha-kusuma)—and the like.....The objects falling under the second class are generally known as things like rajju-sarpa (a rope appearing as a snake), and the like.....Then comes the last class which comprises the created phenomenal objects of the world, i. e., the nama-rupas....., i. e., the changes (vikaras) in all their diversities which we find in the world."¹ Now, having observed that Shankara has employed "the term 'alika', i. e. false, non-existing, and the general term 'asat', i. e., unreal,"² for the objects belonging to the first class which he has also viewed as 'things which have nothing to take their stand upon, which have no permanent ground to sustain them and which are not supported by any underlying substratum,'³ Prof. Shastri has concluded that the objects belonging to 'both the last-mentioned classes of objects' which 'agree one with another', but 'differ from the first class of objects' 'as regards the underlying sustaining ground', cannot, according to Shankara, be unreal or false. In his own words, "if you call the first class unreal or false (as Shankara has justly called them), the other two classes must, by implication, be real... The objects known as shasha-vishana, akasha-kusum, etc., are the only objects which may...be designated, in the system of Shankara, as actually false or unreal."⁴ "Tested by this line of argument," Prof. Shastri continues to say, "even such objects as are known to us as shukti-rajata, rajju-sarpa....., etc., cannot be regarded unreal or false, in the Shankara system. For, can the snakeremain separated from the underlying substratum, viz., the rope ?.....It follows therefore that the man who has, thus, taken pains to prove the reality of such things as rajju-sarpa, maru-marichika, etc., will never feel inclined to regard the actual changes in the world—the empirical objects—the nama-rupas—as unreal or false."⁵

The second point which Prof. Shastri has urged in support of his interpretation of Shankara's philosophy is the latter's use of the term 'satya' for the empirical world. He says : "...while describing the created subtle and gross elements (murtamurta panchabhuta) of the world, Shan-

¹ Intro. Advaita Phil., p. p. 124—125.

³ Ibid. p. 125.

⁵ Ibid. p. 129.

² Ibid. p. 124.

⁴ Ibid. p. 129.

kara calls them—'satya' or 'reals', and the underlying Brahma as—'satya-asya satyam' or 'the Reality of the reals'.¹

In the third place the learned Shastri believes that Shankara could not deny the reality of the created empirical objects, because "...he has laid down the principle that 'what is produced from something, from a prior being-cannot itself be a non-existent thing.' For, a non-being cannot be produced from a real being. As we can know no-thing of the Causal Reality (i. e. Brahma) apart from its effects upon us, the effects or the products must be real."² The world, according to Prof. Shastri, cannot be unreal with Shankara; for in his opinion it is 'nothing but the manifestation of Brahma's nature,'³ which he never holds to be unreal. "The change", Shri Shastri says, "is a relation between two terms. In order to be related the two terms of the relation must be real. The change is therefore a relation between something present and something future, i. e. which is going to be. If you say the future is unreal, is nothing-then the cause or Brahma would itself become unreal."⁴

The fourth thing which appears to Prof. Shastri as a point in support of his own thesis is Shankara's designation of the world as 'anirvachaniya.' He says that the "...world of nama-rupas has frequently been described as in-explicable-anirvachaniya-in the Shankara-bhashya,"⁵ and that the "reasons for characterising the world as 'inexplicable' is... ..that the world is neither absolutely sat (i. e. Brahma), nor it is not-sat (i. e., something absolutely different from Brahma)." "From one point of view," Shri Shastri continues to say, "the world will appear as real or sat, and from another point of view it will appear as unreal or asat...so long as the world is regarded as existing in Brahma in undifferentiated condition, it is identical-abbhinna-with Brahma-not vibhakta or anya from it, and so long it is real or sat. But as soon as the world is differentiated, there is some difference-vailakshanya or bheda also. In the Chhandogya, Shankara remarks that prior to its production, previous to its manifestation, the world was real-sat. But when it was differentiated or came out of Brahma-when nama-rupa actually appeared-we began to look upon it as something absolutely different from Brahma—as vibhakta or anya—as something self-existing and independent. Taken in this way, nama-rupa is unreal-asat. But from a higher view, from the parmarthika standpoint-nama-rupa is not really different or anya from Brahma, but

1 Ibid. p. 129.

2 Intro. Adwaita Phil., p. 130.

4 Ibid. p. 168,

3 Ibid. p. 136 (see also, p. 171).

5 Ibid. p. 135,

inseparably connected with Brahma. Thus from two different views, the nama-rupa or the world is both real and unreal. Hence it cannot be said to be absolutely real or unreal."¹

Of course, Prof. Shastri has not denied the fact that Shankara has compared 'our waking and dream-experiences', but this comparison, according to him, 'does not suggest the falsity' of the former. "Shankara," says he, "never regarded the objects experienced by us to be unreal."² Nothing to say of regarding the experiences of our waking life as unreal, Shankara, in Prof. Shastri's opinion, does not even say that "what a man experiences in his dream is false."³ If such experiences are ever said to be unreal, it is, says Shri Shastri, "...because they are regarded as dharma, i. e. essential property of the self",⁴ which in reality they are not. "The experiences of both the waking and the dreaming states of the man cannot be his atmabhuta, i. e., cannot constitute his swarupa. The nature (swarupa) of the self is what is distinct from these experiences; and this nature underlies these experiences, without losing its own identity in them."⁵

V. A Critical estimate of Prof. K Shastri's arguments :

That Shankara has distinguished between absolutely non-existent things such as 'bandhya-putra' on the one hand and the illusory and empirical objects such as a rajju-sarpa and a pot respectively on the other, cannot be denied. We have ourselves referred to this distinction in chapter V. But the question is 'can we on the basis of this distinction say, as Prof. Shastri has ventured to do, that the objects belonging to the last-mentioned two classes which have an underlying ground to sustain them are real simply because the so-called objects of the first-mentioned class which have no sustaining ground underlying them are said to be unreal ? That Shankara has himself made this presence of a sustaining ground in the case of illusory and empirical objects the basis of his inferring their reality is what even Prof. Shastri has not maintained. All that he has said is that their reality is implied by their having a sustaining ground, for what has no sustaining ground is, and has been held by Shankara to be, unreal. Here, therefore, we are not called upon to shew that Shankara has not inferred the reality of the illusory and empirical objects from the unreality of the objects like bandhya putra or akasha-

1 Intro Adwait Phil p. p. 136—137.

3 Ibid., p. 133.

5 Intro Adwaita Phil., p. 133,

2 Ibid. p. 131.

4 Ibid., (Foot-notes).

kusuma which have been held by him to have no sustaining ground underlying them. All that we are required to see is whether their reality is or is not implied by the unreality of the so-called objects of the latter kind.

Now, if we put Prof. Shastri's argument in a clear-cut form it would be like this: What has no sustaining ground is unreal, therefore, whatever has a sustaining ground must be real. But such an inference is far from being correct. To be very frank it betrays one's ignorance of the logical rules of immediate inference. What can be rightly inferred from the basic proposition here is that something or things having a sustaining ground must be real, and not that whatever has a sustaining ground is real. Prof. Shastri, it appears, makes no distinction between particular and universal propositions. The illusory and the empirical objects have both, no-doubt, a sustaining ground underlying them, but does it warrant us to say that they resemble each other in being real also? A king and a cabbage may both have the same piece of land for their ground and support, but will they, then, agree in respect of being wise or brave also because a bandhya-putra which has no ground to stand on is neither. Nothing to say of Shankara, a great logician, even a layman does not fail to distinguish between the illusory and empirical objects in respect of their status in his experience. That an illusory snake which appears to be there in a rope cannot remain separated from the underlying substratum, viz, the rope, goes without saying. But that does not wipe out the distinction between the illusory snake and its empirically objective ground, the rope. The reality of the rope is no proof of the reality of the snake. And in case it were, the snake would not be called an illusory snake.

That Shankara took pains to prove the reality of such things as rajju-sarpa or maru-marichika is what Prof. Shastri alone can say. How could he who wanted his readers to realize the ultimate unreality of the empirical objects themselves ever think of doing so? The fact is that Shankara viewed things like akasha-kusuma and bandhya-putra as being absolutely non-existent or those which can never form an object of our experience, while he rightly recognized the fact of the actual or possible experience of both the illusory and empirical objects. And when he pointed out that the latter two differ from the former in respect of having a sustaining ground which the former has not, his purpose was to bring home to his reader the fact that no appearance whether real or unreal, empirical or illusory, is ever possible without there being some reality underlying them. And this he did with a view to impressing upon his mind the absurdity of nihilism on the one hand and of the doctrine of

momentariness or 'all-becoming' on the other. He really wanted to direct an aspirant's mind to the only ultimate reality of his Brahma, and not to prove to him the reality of empirical objects, nothing to say of illusory ones which are already recognized as unreal by even a man in the street.

That Shankara has sometimes called even the empirical objects as 'satya' or real cannot, of course, be denied.¹ But that is from the empirical point of view only. From the ultimate or absolute point of view they are never spoken of as real.² So when Shankara speaks of Brahma as 'satysya-satya', or the real of the real, he does not mean that Brahma and the world are real in the same sense. And this is what Prof. Shastri has himself admitted, unwillingly though it may be, when he says that "it is only in comparison with the Absolute Reality (paramartha satya) which is none else but Brahma, that the phenomenal things may be designated asat or unreal, which therefore means relatively real."³ But what is only relatively real is not truly real, we might add; and this is what Shankara would also say. That, according to Shankara, the world is not this or that person's mental states or ideas only, but something objective and different from illusory experiences, we have repeatedly maintained. But that is by no means tantamount to viewing it as real in the true sense. What is really real, with Shankara, is Brahma alone.

Prof. Shastri has then said that Shankara could not deny the reality of the created objects, because "...he has laid down the principle that 'what is produced from something, from a prior being—cannot itself be a non-existent thing.' For, a non-being cannot be produced from a real being." Now, we at least do not know where this principle has been laid down by Shankara. To us it simply seems to be a matter of either wishful thinking or of misconceiving on the part of Shri Shastri himself. For, the words of Shankara which Shastri ji has quoted in support of his view do not at least convey the sense which he has seen in them. These words are. "Asatah shasha-vishanadeh samutpattyadarshanat, asti jagatomulam ...yasmachcha jayate kinchit tadastiti drishtam loke....." (Tait. Bhashya, II, 6). The first part of this assertion means that 'there must be a cause (lit. root) of the world, for creation from non-existent or unreal things such as a hare's horn, etc., has not been seen'; and that this is the mean-

1 Vide SB. Br. Up. V. 14. 4 (स तु चक्षुषो मृषादर्शनम्)

2 See SB. Obh. Up. VII. 17. 1; and SB. Tait Up. II. 2

(न परमार्थसत्यं, एकमेकं हि परमार्थसत्यं ब्रह्म)

3 An Intro. Advaita Phil., p. 130.

ing intended by Shankara becomes obvious when we look to the latter part of the assertion,¹ the indubitable meaning of which is: 'and it is seen in the world that from which anything is produced exists.' It is, thus, quite clear that in the above-mentioned assertion Shankara is impressing upon the mind of his reader the existence or reality of the root or cause of the world, not of the world, as Prof. Shastri conceives. And so far as the production of an absolutely non-existent thing or non-being, such as a 'bandhya-putra' (son of a barren mother), or a hare's horn, is concerned, it is devoid of all significance to add the words 'from a real being' to it; for, such things are simply not produced, neither from a real being nor from an unreal being, nor from non-being, nor from any other form of being or non-being whatsoever.

Shankara was in fact concerned with the establishment of the reality of Brahma, for the knowledge of Brahma was regarded by him as the highest knowledge and as the only means of liberating a man from his bondage, while the knowledge of the reality of the world was by him in no way calculated to serve this useful purpose.² Moreover, the belief in the reality of the world and its contents is so common that it requires no-body's efforts to shew or establish it. So, to think that Shankara employed his philosophical speculations to prove the reality of the world which almost every untutored person has always been believing in, is to attribute to him a purposeless and thoughtless task. But such an attribute is not suitable attribute even for a person of ordinary common-sense, nothing to say for Shankara whose intellectual genius has never been questioned by any scholar conversant with his works.

What Prof. Shastri means by saying that the world is a manifestation of Brahma's nature is not quite intelligible to us. So far as we have been able to understand Shankara, he regards Brahma as one without a second and as pure being, pure bliss, and pure consciousness, while the world, according to him, is characterized by plurality, impurity, change, and the like. How can, then, the world be said to be a manifestation of Brahma's nature as such? And even if it be admitted that there is a sense in which the world may be viewed as manifesting the nature of Brahma is so far as existence (satta), consciousness and bliss, impure and clouded though they may be, are experienced in it, it would not follow that the world as such has been held to be truly real by Shankara. Is not

1 Compare SBS. II. 2.26 (नाभावाद्भाव उत्पद्यते)

2 Tattvopadesha, 49.

the existence of the underlying rope experienced or manifested in the illusory appearance of a snake ? But can we on that account call the illusory snake to be real or really existent ? If not, how can we say that the world which manifests the existence, etc. of Brahma is real in the same sense in which Brahma is ?

Prof. Shastri has also sought to establish the reality of the world by dwelling upon the concept of 'change.' As we have had it, he has maintained that 'change is a relation between two terms', 'between something present and something future, i. e., which is going to be', and that 'in order to be related the two terms of the relation must be real.' And from this it has been concluded by him that the world cannot be said to be unreal, for if it is said to be so, then, in his own words, 'the cause or Brahma would itself become unreal.' That a relation requires two terms to be related cannot, of course, be denied. But, strictly speaking, if change is taken to be a relation, its very reality becomes a matter of dispute. For, in order to be related the related terms to be related, as Prof. Shastri has himself admitted, must be actually present. But in case what is going to change and what it is going to change into are both actually and equally present, there is no change at all. And if it is conceded that while the first term of the relation called change is actually present its second term is only possibly or potentially present, then in an indirect way it is also admitted that the reality of a cause and its effect or effects, the changing and its changed states, is not of the same sort. The one is actual while the other is at best possible only. In fact, the very concept of change is unintelligible. As Mr. Bradley has trenchantly pointed out "Something, A, changes, and therefore it cannot be permanent. On the other hand, if A is not permanent, what is it that changes ? It will no longer be A, but something else. In other words, let A be free from change in time, and it does not change. But let it contain change, and at once it becomes A^1, A^2, A^3 . Then what becomes of A, and of its change, for we are left with something else ? Again, we may put the problem thus. The diverse states of A must exist within one time, and yet they cannot, because they are successive."¹ Moreover, Shankara never speaks of a real change in Brahma. His Brahma, as we have seen, is an ever perfect Reality, eternal and ever-identical with itself. And this Prof. Shastri has also admitted. A changing eternal 'being' would in fact be a contradiction in terms. It can never be maintained that according to

1 Appearance and Reality p. 38.

Shankara the world is the changed Brahma itself. But if so, the reality of the world cannot be proved on the ground of the relation of change between it and Brahma. How can this relation be made the ground of the reality of the world when this relation itself is questionable, and has not been admitted by Shankara whose Brahma is not subject to any change whatsoever ? And in case this change is looked upon as apparent or unreal only, as Shankara has actually done,¹ the very argument of Prof. Shastri to prove the reality of the world on the ground of change falls to the ground.

Another point which Prof. Shastri has urged in support of his view is Shankara's designation of the world as anirvachaniya (inexplicable). That Shankara has so designated the world we have already seen in chapter V, and that by the term 'anirvachaniya' Shankara means something which is 'neither absolutely sat (i. e. Brahma)' nor absolutely 'not-sat', has been admitted by Prof. Shastri him-self. But he seems to believe that what is anirvachaniya is not unreal. Of course, if the word 'unreal' is taken to denote only what is absolutely non-existent like the son of a barren-mother, then the world cannot be called unreal. But we see no reason so to restrict the meaning of the term 'unreal.' Do we not regard illusory appearances like the snake-in-a rope as unreal ? And so far as Shankara is concerned we can definitely say that he has not confined the use of the word 'unreal' to what is absolutely non-existent only, but has undoubtedly extended it to all things which have no fixed or identical nature of their own. It is therefore not only the illusory objects and dream-experiences alone, but also the objects of the phenomenal world itself, which he has unhesitatingly declared to be unreal. From the empirical point of view Shankara may, of course, be said to have viewed the world as real; but with him the empirical point of view is not, truly speaking, the ultimately or absolutely real point of view. From the real or absolute point of view the world has undoubtedly been called unreal.² Prof. Shastri has also recognized these two points of view. But what is this that he has tried to show just the reverse of what Shankara has said

1 SBS. II. 1. 14 (विकारजातस्यानृतत्वाभिधानात्)

2 SBS. II. 1. 14; II. 1. 20; SBG. XIII. 2; XV. 3; Svātma-prakashika, 6; AP., 62, 56, 51; Viveka-Churamani, 238, 234; Praudhanubhuti, 9 Atma-bodha 6, 7; Sarvavedantasiddhantasarasamgraha, 286; Advaita-pancharatnam, 3; Tattvopadesha, 50. Shatashloki (दृश्यजातं सकलमपि मूढैव) SB. Br. Up. III. 5. 1. SBS. Mand. Karika, III. 19 (न परमार्थसत् इतम्)

and what we are maintaining here. According to him the world is real from the higher or Paramarthika point of view, but unreal from the lower stand-point. This is a clear instance of how and to what extent interpretations of a text can differ from it. It does not seem to be necessary to say more about it. Our account of Shankara's Brahmapada so far must have brought home to our reader the truth and untruth of our own and of Prof. Shastri's assertions respectively; and our further account of it will lend further support to our stand. And a more inquisitive reader will do well to look into Shankara's own works referred to here and at other places in similar contexts. It may, however, be added that in calling the things of the world as unreal from the lower point of view Prof. Shastri has confused between (i) the actual lower (ordinary or empirical) point of view of things, and (ii) the judgment passed on this lower point of view from a higher stand-point. That the things viewed as real from the ordinary or lower point of view cannot be denied; but if we judge such a view of things from a higher point of view, we can, of course, say that things so viewed are really unreal; and this is probably what Prof. Shastri means to say when he asserts that "taken in this way the nama-repa is unreal-asat." But it is certainly not viewing things from the lower point of view. It is really viewing them, or the lower point of view there-of, from a higher point of view.

As to Prof. Shastri's observation that by comparing waking experiences with dream-experiences Shankara 'does not suggest the falsity of the former' we would simply refer to Shankara's own commentary on Mandukya-Karika, II 4, in which, nothing to say of suggesting the falsity of waking experiences, he has emphatically asserted their falsity, and that definitely on the ground of their similarity with the experiences of a dream-state. There he says, in the very beginning of his commentary, "That the objects of waking experience are false or unreal is the enunciation (Jagradrishyanam bhavanam vaitathyamiti pratijna), and then concludes it with the words that 'objectivity and unreality or falsity are common to both' (drishyatvamasatyatvam chavishishtamubhayatra). Now, from this and from so many other unambiguous assertions of Shankara, to some of which we have already referred, and in which the waking experiences have been definitely declared to be unreal like dream-experiences, one can conveniently judge the faithfulness of Prof. Shastri's interpretations of Shankara's works. It is true that the unreality of dream-experiences is not known as such in the dream-state itself much as the unreality of waking-experiences is not realized until and unless one reflects over their nature and rises to a higher point of view. But this

does not mean that it is not a fact, or is not known as such even when a dream terminates and its place is taken over by the experiences of waking life. The fact that the unreality of a dream-state is relative to the reality of waking-experiences does not warrant one to say that the objects experienced in a dream are real. They might be so in the case of a person, if there be any, who remains continuously dreaming all-through his short or long life; but for one who has had the experiences of both the dreaming and waking life the objects of the former are indubitably unreal. Similarly to an unreflecting person the empirical objects may remain the only real things throughout his life; but to one who has a mind to see through their apparent characteristics their real nature, these objects too begin to appear as unreal.

That neither the experiences of a dream-state nor those of waking life constitute the essential nature or svarupa of one's true self is a fact which was duly recognized by Shankara, and it is also quite true that to view them as forming the 'essential property of the self' is, according to him, due to one's ignorance or avidya. But it does not, in any way, follow from it that Shankara held these experiences to be in themselves real, and to be unreal only when "they are regarded as dharma, i. e., essential property of the self." As a matter of fact not to form the essential nature of Self (or Brahma) is with Shakara, really speaking, the same thing as not to be real. So in admitting that Shankara calls the waking and dream experiences unreal if 'they are regarded as dharma, i. e., essential property of the Self,' Shri Shastri has virtually admitted that these experiences are as a matter of fact, unreal with him. That from the higher point of view Shankara viewed the worldly objects and their experiences as unreal, much in the same way as the objects of a dreamstate are viewed and declared to be false by him and by a person who is awake, has been repeatedly said and shown by us, and needs no reiteration.

Shri Shastri has taken up a number of many such upanishadic and Shankara's assertions as really describe the world and its objects to be unreal; but he has put his own interpretations on them. It would, however, mean an unnecessary augmentation of the bulk of our work to dwell upon and consider all such assertions and their interpretations by Prof. Shastri in his own way. The consideration of one of them only, I think, would do. It may, I believe, conveniently be calculated to serve as a specimen of Prof. Shastri's independent but unfaithful interpretations of Shankara's words or views. The expression which Prof. Shastri has sought to explain at first is an expression of the Chhandogya Upanishad. Let us take this very expression, and see if his interpretation of it tallies with

that of Shankara himself. This expression is the widely celebrated expression: 'vacharambhanam vikaro namadheyam mrittiketyeva satyam' (Chh. Up. VI. 1. 4). The first thing that should here strike the reader of Shri Shastri's work, "An Introduction To Advaita Philosophy," is his punctuation of the expression under consideration. While in the original text we find no punctuation mark, he has inserted a comma before and a comma after the word 'namadheyam', and a dash before the phrase 'mrittiketyeva satyam'. And this apparently indicates the purpose behind it. All the same the Upanishadic expression is so clear that it is not easy to change its meaning altogether. The phrase 'mrittiketyeva satyam' is so emphatic in asserting the reality of clay alone that no change or modification of clay, in the form of a cup, or pot, etc., can be said to have been meant to be viewed as real. Similarly, the words 'vacharambhanam' and 'namadheyam' simply mean 'a name depending on a word,'¹ or 'a mere name,'² or a name issuing forth from speech only. But to Shri Shastri the word 'namadheya' means 'nama-samanya' or class-name to which, as he says, the transformations or the changes of clay etc. 'belong as inseparably connected.' "This is the relation," he says, "between a genus (samanya) and the several species (visheshas) subsumed under it."³ "And this samanya," he continues to assert, "is real-satya in them, as the clay, i. e., mrit-samanya is real in the specific differences, viz, the cup, the plate and the pot."⁴ Then, while concluding his remarks, Shri Shastri has affirmed that "the readers will see that this is the real explanation of the celebrated sentence.....," and that "this explanation does not at all make the vikaras non-existent or unreal or asatya."⁵

Now, let us see Shankara's own interpretation of the Upanishadic expression, and compare it with the one which Shri Shastri has sought to put on it. Shankara says, "An effect or modification is a mere name, which has its origin in or exists through speech only.....but in reality there is nothing like what is called an effect or modification. All modifications which are mere names only are untrue or false; only the clay is real."⁶ "What is called a modification or effect is a mere name only which has speech alone for its origin or support. It is not a thing: In reality

1 'The Upanishads' (selections) (Eng. Trans. by T. M. P. Mahadevan), p. 195.

2 Indian Idealism, p. 44.

3 Intro. Advaita Phil., p. 147.

5 Ibid. p. 149,

4 Ibid. p. 148.

6 SBS, II. 1. 14,

the clay alone is a real thing.”¹ The word ‘namadheya’ has been taken by Shankara to mean ‘mere name’ (namaiva), while Prof. Shastri has taken it in the sense of ‘class-name’ (nama-samanya). Shankara has said ‘the vikaras or modifications originate from speech only and are mere names which are not real’; Prof. Shastri says that ‘all vikaras....., which are all dependent on Vaka,—to which specific names or words are applied—are, properly speaking, only namadheya, i. e., nama-samanya. And this samanya is real—satya—in them, as the clay, i. e. mritsamanya is real in the specific differences, viz, the cup, the plate and the pot.”² Shri Shastri, it seems, is not prepared clearly to say that the modifications are unreal, though he could not avoid saying that they depend on vak (speech) and are only namadheya. But, then, playing on the word ‘namadheya’ he has brought in the word ‘nama-samanya’ which has no place here at all, and which Shankara has not mentioned in any commentary of his on the expression concerned. While Shankara has, by means of this parallel instance, tried to bring home to his reader the unreality and non-existence of the worldly objects and the ultimate reality of Brahma alone, Shri Shastri, on the other hand, seems to hide the fact of their unreality, as spoken of in the expression under consideration, by bringing in the word ‘nama-samanya’ and by impressing upon the mind of reader the relative reality of this samanya.

Thus, the difference between Shankara’s and Shastri’s interpretations of the Upanishadic expression under consideration is not negligible, and it along with the consideration of Prof. Shastri’s arguments to prove the reality of the world would, I think, suffice to indicate the unfaithfulness of his interpretations of Shankara’s views. So far as we are concerned, we may conclude this chapter by saying that Shankara is neither a subjective-idealist nor a realist. While he has, on the one hand, distinguished between the mere subjective states of one’s mind and the empirically real common objects, he has also, on the other hand, spoken of the worldly objects as being unreal from the ontological or ultimate reality point of view. To him Brahma, the universal Self, alone is truly real.

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1 SB. Chh. Up. VI. 1. 4 (वागालम्बनमात्रं नामैव केवलं न विकारो नाम वस्तुवस्ति, परमार्थतो मृत्तिकैव सत्यं वस्तुवस्ति)

2 Intro. Advaita Phil., p. 148.

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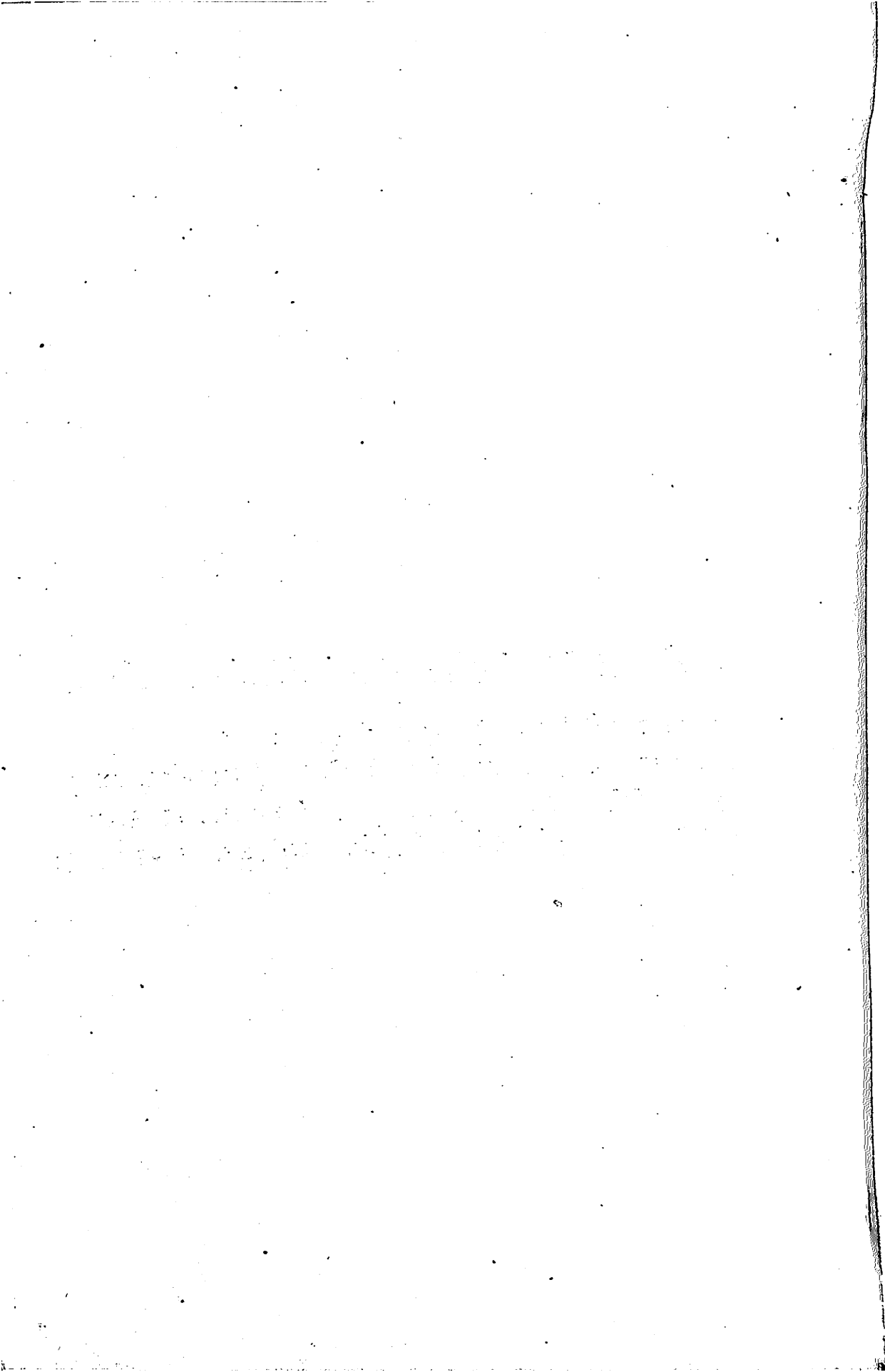
The Ethical Aspect of Brahmanavada

यत्पलाभात्त परो लाभः यत्सुखात् न परं सुखम् ।

यज्ज्ञानात्त परं ज्ञानं तद्ब्रह्मेत्यवधारयेत् ॥ (आत्मबोध, ५४)

‘न पापकर्मणोऽनुपरतः...आत्मानमाप्नुयात्’ (कठ उप. भा. २.२४)

‘यावत्किञ्चिद्व्याकृतं तत्सर्वं धर्माधर्मयोः फलम्’ (बृह. उप. भा. ४.४५)



Chapter 7

THE ETHICAL ASPECT OF SHANKARA'S BRAHMAVADA

I Brahmvada, a Philosophy of life :

Philosophy in India has probably never been detached from life¹. There is hardly any Indian school of thought which may not be said to be motivated by an active interest in life. And Shankara's Brahmvada, we may say, is no exception to it. Like all other systems of thought in India it has tried to consider not only the highest ideal of human life but also the means of realizing it, and it has attached as great an importance to the practical living of one's philosophy as to the soundness of it. If life be narrowed down to a life of unthoughtful indulgence in sensuous pleasures or to living on perceptual level only, and if by philosophy of life be meant only that philosophy which simply plays a second fiddle to the views of a lay-man, then, of course, Shankara's Brahmvada would have no claim to be called a philosophy of life. But so long as human nature is what it is and man continues to distinguish between the pleasant and the good, the ephemeral and the enduring, this philosophy would certainly have an important place amongst the best philosophies of life; and the fact that it has given so great a prominence to the ethico-spiritual discipline as a means of realizing the greatest good of human life will always press its claim to that place.

It may, however, be admitted that Brahmvada is not meant for every Tom, Dick and Herry, but so is no philosophy which is really worthy of the name. Even the so-called Charvaka or Lokayatika philosophy, it may be remarked, is not meant for all; for, it cannot suit all temperaments and satisfy all human cravings indiscriminately. The fact

¹ See 'The Nature of Self', p. 4, and IP. Vol. I, p. 25.

that Brahnavada does not bring itself down to the mental level of the man in the street does not deprive it of its value as a philosophy of life, much the same as the fact that the higher mathematical or scientific studies do not conform to the mental capacities of many a cobbler or kitchen-maid does not discredit them as valueless for human life as such. Shankara's Brāhminavada may fail 'to appeal to those who turn to philosophy for the justification of their imperfect ideas of worldly distinctions and worldly values'¹, but, to those persons, and they are certainly not negligible in number, the soil of whose minds and hearts is suitable for it to take root and grow, it not only positively appeals but also gives immense satisfaction and extraordinary solace.

Should it be urged that Brahnavada is incompatible with an active life in society, for it attaches so great an importance to a life of renunciation, a votary of Brahnavada would cite the instances of Swami Ramakrishna, Ramatirtha, Vivekananda and Shankara himself, along with those of so many other pioneer Brahnavadins, who not only lived in society, but were decidedly amongst the greatest benefactors of it. Truly speaking, it is not the so-called public workers only who are benefactors of mankind. The philosophers, poets, and scientists who predominantly and even exclusively busy themselves in their own respective undertakings, forgetting and sacrificing even the ordinary pleasures and joys of their life, are also amongst the true benefactors of human beings. But for them, the world would have been quite different from what it actually is, and the so-called public workers might have led it along a very different road on its march, whether onward or backward, it is not for us to say. In the words of Milton 'they also serve who only stand and wait'; and the philosophers, and amongst them the Brahnavadins like Shankara, we may add, not only stand and wait, but also make positive contributions to the real well-being of human society. As to the detachment to gross pleasures and common-place worldly affairs, it may be said that it has, in a way, got to be done, if something really great in philosophy, science or art is to be achieved. But that does not deprive any of these uncommon undertakings of the social value of its achievements.

Shankara meant his Brahnavada strictly to be a philosophy of life, a creed to be actually practised and carefully lived, and not to be a mere intellectual speculation. With him it is not merely the verbal or intellectual understanding or scriptural passages that really matters, It may be a

I An Intro. to Indian Phil., p. 418.

necessary step to the realization of one's identity with Brahma; but certainly it is not the same as that realization. The true realizer of Brahma has got to lead a life befitting his realization of it. All selfishness, all narrow-mindedness and all attachment and aversion must disappear. He lives in the world, but is not of the world. He may gladly work for it, but is not bound by it. His is the spirit of a true player who plays his game for its own sake, and not for the sake of any ulterior end¹. And we know that when a game is so played it is best played.

To hold that Shankara's Brahnavada is not a philosophy of life involves, indeed, a gross misunderstanding of it. In the first place, it does not take Brahnavada in its entirety, and confuses the product with the process of it. So far as at least its process is concerned it can definitely be said that even worldly considerations have quite an important place in it². Secondly, this view has originated from the misleading epithet 'mayavada', which has been largely responsible for making current the view that according to Shankara the world is merely an illusion. This view, therefore, "falls to the ground, if we do not accept the merely illusory nature of the world"³, and bear in mind the distinction between the means and the process of realizing Brahma, on the one hand, and the state of Brahma-realizedness on the other, remembering that with Shankara realization of Brahma is not mere speculative understanding but the most certain immediate experience of it.

II The necessity of an ideal for life :

Life as such is something dynamic, a process or movement onward. And this, we may say, is particularly true of human life, especially of ethical life, which by its very nature is a complex of such activities as necessarily look to something yet unrealized but worthy of being realized by us. Morality, it has been said, 'lies in the chase and not in the prey'. But there can be no chase without there being a prey to be chased. Ethical life, indeed, implies not only an endeavour to do or attain something, but also something to be done or attained. It may nicely be compared to a journey which means going towards a preconceived destination. And in case a person has no destination to be reached, his life would either be a sheer drifting or no life at all. Not to go on is either to go back or to stand still, or stagnate; and to go on without knowing where to go is groping in the dark.

1 Vide SBG. II. 38 (लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ समीकृत्वा)

2 Vide SBG. II. 34, 35 and 36.

3 IP. Vol. II. p. 621.

The real movement onward, the genuine progress, of human beings is made possible only through the conscious realization of worth-while ends. The pursuit of an ideal or ideals of one's life imparts freshness and adds a peculiar charm to it. That the 'presence of an ideal spurs one to greater effort'¹ cannot be denied. The seeking of an ideal seems to meet a definite and vital need of human nature. There is hardly any human being who feels perfectly satisfied with what he is. Dissatisfaction with one's present condition and craving for what one is not seem to characterize human nature as such. Human beings, however, do not always have a clear consciousness of the highest ideal of their life. More often than not, they have many ideals which are rather vague and narrow, and sometimes even conflicting and unworthy of them. And the result of it is that there is an unpleasant disharmony in the life of such persons. The study of the highest ideal or value of human life, therefore, is as important as, or probably even more important than, the study of any other thing. In the words of Sir C. V. Raman, the well-known Indian Scientist of our own days, "the foundation of true knowledge lies in man's capacity to discover and to weigh human values"². The science that studies human values or ideals involved in human conduct is called Ethics or Moral-philosophy, which now enjoys an independent status, different from that of metaphysics or ontology. But Shankara, like other Indian thinkers, did not make any attempt to bifurcate it from metaphysics or philosophy in general. And this also goes to show that his philosophy has a close bearing on human life, in so far as a consideration of its values or ideals forms an integral part of it.

III The Highest Ideal of human life :

According to Shaunkara, the realization of our true Self or Brahma is the highest goal of our life. Brahma, according to him, as we have already seen, is not only the most perfect Being but also the most perfect Bliss. The greatest good of man, Shankara says, lies in the realization of Brahma, the highest Self, and nowhere else³. There is no gain greater than that of Brahma; no bliss or knowledge superior to the bliss and knowledge of it⁴. The knowledge of Brahma is the highest ideal of human

1 Morgan Gilliland : An Intro. to PSy., p. 261.

2 An extract from Dr. Raman's Convocation Address at Agra.
(vide Amrit Bazar Patrika, Nov. 20, 1950)

3 SBS. I. I. 28.

4 Atma-bodha, 54,

beings¹. It is our highest goal, our ultimate destination; for, being perfectly immutable and indestructible, it is of the nature of eternal knowledge and perfect freedom². Though Brahma in itself knows no distinctions of virtue and vice, good and evil, etc.³, for us, the human beings, it is the Greatest Good, the Greatest Bliss, the Highest Knowledge and the Most Perfect Existence, all par excellence in one⁴. It is free from all evil, and devoid of all disturbances⁵. Its knowledge is not only the knowledge of the highest reality, but also the knowledge of the summum-bonum of human life⁶. The realization of Brahma, the true Self of all, is, thus, to be conceived as the greatest concern of all human beings who alone among all conscious creatures are worthy of it. The person who realizes his true self in his present life makes the best of it, while one who fails to make good this purpose is the greatest loser⁷. There is no attainment better than that of the self. It is this that all Vedic assertions and scriptural prescriptions have for their ultimate end⁸. By the knowers of Brahma the realization of self has been declared to be the greatest gain, for it is eternal⁹. Self-realization, therefore, is the greatest value of human life, the touch-stone of all values of it. The worth of all our actions is ultimately to be judged by this standard only. The actions which are conducive to it are to be viewed as right actions, whereas those which stand in its way are to be pronounced as wrong or bad ones. "The ethically 'good' is what helps the realization of the infinite, and the ethically bad is its opposite"¹⁰. No doubt 'Self-realization' as the ultimate standard of morality is something very general and cannot be easily availed of in judging the moral worth of one's every-day actions. Shankara himself, it appears, was aware of it. So we find him advocating other more easily available and concrete criteria of morality, such as conformity to Scriptural injunctions¹¹ and to the examples of men of recognized virtue¹². In fact, these latter criteria of morality are the most commonly recognized orthodox criteria of it¹³. And from the point of view of practical applicabi-

1 SB. Tait. Up. II. 1; SBS. I. 1. 1 (ब्रह्मस्वगतिर्हि पुरुषार्थः)

2 SBS. I. 1. 4; see also SB. Katha Up. III. 11.

3 SBG. Intro. (नैव धर्मो.....शुभाशुभी); SB. Katha Up. II. 14,

4 Atma-bodha, 64.

5 SBG. II. 51.

6 SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (परं पुरुषार्थं)

7 SB. Kena Up. II. 5.

8 Upadeshasahasri, XVII. 4.

9 Ibid. XVII. 5.

10 I. P. Vol. II, p. 614.

11 Vide SBG. IV. 17; XVI. 23; XVI. 24; SBS. III. 2. 25.

12 Vide SBG. III. 21; SBS. III. 2. 25.

13 Manusmriti, II. 1; II. 12.

lity in matters moral they can certainly be said to be more easily approachable than any abstract principle underlying them. But in case the question of the morality of these practical criteria themselves is raised Shankara would undoubtedly refer to his ultimate criterion of Self-realization itself.

The emphasis laid on Self-realization as the Summum-Bonum of human life does not, however, mean that Shankara was not alive to the presence of other values in this world. Really speaking he duly recognized not only the fact of many other things being actually desired by men¹, but also the worthwhileness of many of them for a happy existence here and here-after². As a matter of fact, dharma (performance of one's duties), artha (prosperity and possessions), kama (pleasures and enjoyments) and moksha (emancipation from bondage) are the four-fold values that have been recognized by Indian thinkers in general³. And Shankara, we may say, is no exception to them. No doubt, he has, like other thinkers, attached the greatest importance to the attainment of moksha, which, according to him, is the same as Self-realization or realization of Brahma⁴, and in which one not only gets absolutely free from all evils and afflictions, but also attains the highest bliss and beatitude that never decays or perishes⁵. But that is by no means tantamount to a denial of other values. Of course, these other values are definitely viewed as being immensely inferior to the one of Self-realization or moksha; nevertheless they have not been altogether neglected. 'Abhyudaya' is the word that Shankara has generally used for all these values. It literally means rise or upliftment; but it has, in fact, been employed to indicate not only moral upliftment, which is one's real rise, for it takes one upward towards the realization of one's highest end, viz. Self-realization, but also worldly prosperity and happiness or enjoyment, for they also in a way serve to provide the feeling of exaltation to one who has them. Not only this, wealth or worldly prosperity has also sometimes been viewed by Indian thinkers as a means of performing one's religious duties and thereby of attaining happiness also⁶. Any way, Shankara has explicitly spoken of

1 Vide SBG. X. 1. (अभ्युदय..... याच्यते)

2 Vide SBS. I. 3. 30 (प्राणिनाम् च सुखप्राप्तये..... विधीयते)

3 Vide Vedantaparihasha, I.

4 SBS, I. 1. 4 (ब्रह्मभावश्च मोक्षः)

5 Ibid. (नित्यश्च मोक्षः)

6 (धनान् धर्मं ततः सुखम्).

'bhoga' (enjoyment) and 'abhyudaya' as being a purushartha (a value of object of a person's desire) along with that of moksha called apavarga or nihshreyasa¹.

Abhyudaya or bhoga, however, is not something which, according to Shankara, deserves to be made the ultimate end of human life. It is essentially unenduring. Nothing to say of our happiness and prosperity here on this earth, even the happiness in heaven, sooner or later, comes to an end². But, for those persons in whom the desire to attain the highest end of human life does not somehow arise, these values of finite nature cannot be said to have been undermined. If they have been denounced, they have been denounced for one who entertains the desire to attain the eternal and the greatest good of his life. For, a desire for worldly prosperity and pleasures definitely stands in the way of one's self-realization which requires an unruffled state of mind, not possible for those to have whose minds are disturbed and distracted by such desires³. The self-luminous light of the Self, it is believed, cannot be reflected in that mirror of mind which is stained by desires other than the desire of knowing the Self itself.

The so-esteemed values of the world, finite as they are, must sooner or later come to an end. In the words of Nachiketa of Katha Upanishad they last till tomorrow only (shvobhavah). Termination or destruction is the ultimate and inevitable lot of all that is finite⁴. The freshness and blossoming of the spring of youth is bound to be followed by the staleness and withering of the autumn of old age as certainly as the merriments of marriage are, by the bewailings of death. Even the felicity of one's ascent to heaven must be felt as a folly on the day of disastrous fall from there. If ever, it is in the infinite joy of the Absolute alone that one can hope to attain eternal happiness and perpetual peace. It is therefore the infinite bliss, the infinite existence and the infinite knowledge of the Absolute Brahma that Shankara has rightly believed to be the highest good and hence to be the highest goal of human life. For, it is by realizing it alone that a person can ever think in terms of the realization of all his desires. The realization of finite ends, whatever they be, cannot satisfy man's ever-

1 SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (भोगापवर्गौ पुरुषार्थौ)

SBG. X. 18 (अभ्युदयनिःश्रेयसपुरुषार्थः.....)

SBS. I. 1. 1 (अभ्युदयफलं धर्मज्ञानं..... निःश्रेयसफलं तु ब्रह्मविज्ञानं)

2 SB. Chh. Up. VIII. 1. 6 (एवमेवायमुन्न पुण्यचितो लोकः क्षीयते)

3 Vide BG. II. 44 and SB. on it.

4 Chh. Up. VII. 2+. 1 and SB. on it.

multiplying desires, much in the same way, as the pouring of clarified butter into fire cannot quench its thirst for more and more of it¹. Though for Brahma itself there is nothing to be avoided or attained², no virtue no vice³, for us, the finite beings, there can be no gain greater than it, no joy that can equal it, and no knowledge that can surpass it. It is the paragon of all good, of all beauty and of all truth. It is, no doubt, true that man in his essential nature has been held by Shankara to be identical with Brahma itself; but it is also equally true that he has not shrunk from admitting the fact that this identity is some how concealed from him. It is therefore quite in conformity with his recognition of this fact that he has attached as great an importance to the means of removing this concealment as to the value of the highest human ideal itself. A person may kick a ladder back when it has served his purpose of reaching the roof he wanted to be on; but he will certainly not be sane to kick it off while he is on it. A destination is certainly not the same thing as the journey to it. The journey has necessarily got to be undertaken if the destination is really meant ever to be reached.

IV The means of Self-realization :

According to Shankara jnana or perfect knowledge is the only direct means of moksha (emancipation from bondage)⁴, which is with him the same thing as the attainment of Brahmahood or Self-realization⁵. The knowledge of Brahma, he says, is verily the means of attaining immortality⁶. In his opinion this fact that moksha is the result of perfect knowledge is the view of all the advocates of it⁷, and a well-settled purport of all the scriptures as well as of logic⁸. There are, in fact, hundreds of such texts and passages in Shankara's works as unambiguously declare the knowledge of the Self or Brahma, or of their identity⁹, as being the only direct means of attaining the summum-bonum of human life; but it

1 BG. III. 39 and SB. on it (Compare also Tulsidasa's Vinayapatrika, 198)

2 Praudhanubhuti, 10.

3 Charpatapanjarikastotra (पुण्यापुण्यविवर्जितपन्थः)

4 SBS. II. 1. 14 (ब्रह्मण आत्मैकत्वदर्शनं मोक्षसाधनम्)

SBG. VI. 36 (मोक्षसाधनं सम्यग्दर्शनम्)

IV. 33 (ज्ञाने मोक्षसाधने.....)

5 SBS. I. 1. 4.

6 SBS. I. 3. 39 (ब्रह्मज्ञानात् ह्यमृतत्वप्राप्तिः)

7 SBS. II. 1. 11.

8 SBG. IV. 39.

9 SBS. II. 1. 14.

is neither possible nor desirable to refer to all of them here. The few that we have referred to are enough for our purpose. One may, however, look for a few more of them in Shankara's commentary on Shvetashvatara Upanishad, III. 8; VI. 13; VI. 15, and on Gita, II. 39. II. 51., and II, Introduction.

There is, however, one thing that needs to be clearly borne in mind in this connection. And it is that the liberating or true knowledge of the identity of one's Self with Brahma is not, with Shankara, merely a verbal knowledge of this identity, but an actual direct experience of it. Shankara has definitely distinguished between these two when he says that 'it is only a few knowers, and not others who are able to acquire an exact and actual vision of the ultimate Reality'. A person, according to him, may be quite an adept in making a nice harangue on Brahma, but he may really lack in true insight into its real nature, and hence be subject to all sorts of attachment. Such a person is really no good. In Shankara's own words he is a first-class fool and is destined to be born again and again². What, therefore, really matters is the acquisition of an immediate and indubitable vision of the ultimate Reality, the Brahma, and not the mere verbal knowledge of it. And it is possible only when one's mind and heart both are perfectly cleansed of all their impurity. So, for the sake of acquiring the true and direct knowledge of one's real Self, one has to undergo a strict ethico-spiritual discipline and to make a sincere and incessant endeavour worthy of it. Such practices and endeavours as are essential for the acquisition of knowledge are said to be the conditions or means of it, and they may be rightly viewed as indirect or subsidiary means of moksha or Self-realization.

The means of knowledge, according to Shankara, are those conditions or factors which definitely tend to bring it about³. These means may at first be divided into internal or proximate (antaranga) and external or remote (bahiranga) means. The internal means are those which are closely connected with knowledge, while the external ones are those which are connected with the desire to know, and not with knowledge directly⁴. Karma-yoga, comprising of sacrificial performances, etc.⁵, and unaccompanied by a

1 SBG. IV. 34 (ज्ञानवन्तोऽपि केचित् यथावत् तत्त्वदर्शनशीला, अपरे न)

2 AP., 133.

3 SBG. IV. 38.

4 SBS. III. 4. 27 and Bhamati on it (विद्यास्वरूपसंयोगादन्तरंगानि बहिरङ्गानि कर्माणि विविदिषासंयोगात्)

5 SBS. III. 4. 27,

desire for its fruits is, for example, and external means¹. It is to be undertaken for the sake of the purification of one's mind or internal sense-organ². For, when the internal-organ (antahkarāṇa) gets cleansed the light of the Self-Knowledge shines in it³. One's success in respect of the acquisition of knowledge depends upon the purification of one's mind which, in turn, is the result of such (obligatory) actions as are performed without a desire for their fruits⁴. These actions, thus, help the arousal of knowledge from a distance (or indirectly)⁵. They lead one to desire the acquisition of knowledge, but not directly to acquire it. Hence, their performance has been viewed as an external or remote means of knowledge, and not as a direct or proximate means of it.

The internal means of knowledge are said to be four in number. The are (i) viveka, (ii) viraga, (iii) Samadamadi shatsampat and (iv) Mumukshutva⁶.

Viveka is the discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal. It consists in arriving at the decision that 'I am by nature eternal, whereas the objects of my knowledge are of opposite nature⁷. Viraga is the absence of desire for seen or unseen enjoyable objects, and arises from the practice in seeing or visualizing the faults of these objects⁸. It consists in the renunciation of desire to enjoy the fruits of one's actions both here and hereafter⁹. In its pure form it indicates an attitude of aversion to all finite objects which are capable of giving us only passing pleasures, and requires us to feel as little interested in the highest of them, such as the status of Brahma, as in the lowest, such as the excrement of a crow¹⁰. In other words, viraga, or dispassion, or detachment from worldly prosperity or enjoyments, may be viewed as a necessary condition of undivided attention and whole-hearted devotion to the difficult task of Self-realization; for, a mind which is not withdrawn from the objects of diverse sorts cannot be fully concentrated on it.

The third requisite condition of jnana really comprises of six conditions called shama, dama, uparati, titiksha, samadhi and shraddha. The word shama stands for the restraint of the inner sense organ¹¹. It connotes a constant attempt to give up one's craving for this or that object¹². For,

1 SBG. VI. 2; also Intro. to Adhyaya, 6. 2 SBG. VI. 12.

3 Tattvopadesha, 45. 4 SBG. II. 4^a.

5 Bhamati, I. 1. 1 (आरादुपकारकत्वात् कर्मणः.....)

6 Vide SBS. I. 1. 1; II. 1. 14; SB. Br. Up. IV. 5. 6; AP., 101; Tattvopadesha, 76-77, 82, 83.

7 AP. 5.

8 SBG. VI. 35.

9 SBS. I. 1. 1.

10 Vide AP., 4.

11 SBG. X. 4.

12 AP., 6.

so long as one's inner sense-organ remains restless, the nature of one's true Self cannot be grasped¹. The mental visualization of objects, it is said, is the root cause of all evils². But in order to stop one's mind from visualizing or desiring various objects it is essential that one should first control one's sense-organs also. It is thus restraining or controlling of the external sense-organs which is called 'dama'³. A seeker of true knowledge, therefore, is required to withdraw his sense-organs from their objects⁴. For, such sense-organs as are allowed a free play with their objects arrest and take away one's mind along with them, and thus prove to be a source of great distraction to the person concerned⁵. This withdrawal of the senses from their objects, when effected, is called uparati⁶, and the person who has become free from all desires for objects an uparata person⁷.

Titiksha is the capacity to endure (unmurmuringly) all pain and suffering⁸. Nobody, it is true, likes or invites sorrows and sufferings, of his own accord. But no body, at the same time, is free from them. The world we live in is so complex and the machinery of our organism so complicated that in spite of our best precautions and the most sagacious medical advice, we cannot be sure of our immunity from them. It is not for us, the finite beings, completely to control all the elements. All that we can do is to contract a habit of enduring their untoward effects on us. To cry in cold or to writhe in heat is of no use. The more one does so, the greater are the pangs that one experiences. It is only the acquisition of the attitude of indifference or insusceptibility to them that can help us in retaining the peace of our mind which is so essential for the successful pursuit of any really worthy end of our life. And here lies the value of titiksha as a means of Self-realization.

Samadhi or samadhana is the concentration of one's mind on Sat or Brahma; while Shraddha is the respectful faith in the assertions of one's preceptor or scriptures⁹. In a philosophy like that of Descartes which is founded on doubt faith, of course, can have no legitimate place; but by Indian thinkers in general it has been held to be a necessary condition of knowledge. And there is undoubtedly a sense in recognizing its value for a beginner. In point of fact, faith occupies an important place not only in our every-day life but also in matters educational. Economy in learning looks to it, and progress in knowledge needs it. Imitation,

1 SBG. II. 66.

4 SBG. II. 58.

7 SB. Br, Up. IV. 4. 23.

2 Ibid. II. 62.

5 Vide SBG. II. 60.

8 AP., 7.

3 SBG. X. 4; AP., 6.

6 AP., 7.

9 AP., 8.

we may say, is essential for invention. One who has never imitated shall probably never invent. "Imitation and invention", as Prof. James has maintained, "are the two legs on which human race has historically walked". The progress of human civilization and the furtherance of human knowledge depend on both of them. The extirpation of either would virtually mean the crippling of human culture. But imitation, especially conscious, implies faith, explicit or implicit, in one who is imitated. Faith is, thus, not only an actual fact of human life, but also a very desirable aspect of it. No doubt, neither imitation nor faith deserves to be valued as an end of human life. But as means their value cannot be honestly denied. And it is as a means only that the value of faith has been recognized by Shankara. It is only initial faith, and not final faith, that has been advocated by him; it is not the faith of religion that goes not beyond itself, but a faith that seeks and finds its fulfilment in actual experience. Its only purpose is to serve an aspirant as a speedy and reliable guide to his ultimate goal.

Mumukshata or Mumukshutva (desire for one's liberation) is another essential condition of Self-realization. That desire must precede the attainment of every end of one's life goes without saying. What needs to be made clear is the fact that it is not a half-hearted or superficial desire, but a genuine and firm desire only, that can prove to be really efficacious, especially in matters subtle and difficult to realize. Perseverance and tenacity of purpose are the essential accompaniments of a really sincere desire. Shankara has, therefore, defined mumukshata as that deep-seated and unshaky active attitude of mind which is inquisitive about the means of one's liberation from one's bondage in the world.¹ As with Shankara one's liberation and realization of Brahma are one and the same thing, an aspirant after liberation is accordingly required to desire to know Brahma when he has duly qualified himself for it through the acquisition of the four-fold sadhanas or means so far mentioned (viz., viveka, vairagya, shamadamadisadhanasampat, and mumukshutva).² But desire alone is not enough. The realization of the desire to know Brahma has got to be sought through proper means which according to Shankara, as according to Yajñavalkya of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, are Shrivana, manana and nididhyasana.³ Shrivana here means hearing or learning, from a prece-

1 Vide AP., 9.

2 Vide SBS. I. 1. 1.

3 Br. Up. II. 4. 5 and SB on it; also SBS. II. 1. 14; III. 4. 38 and Tattvopadesha, 76, 77 and 82.

ptor and scriptures, about the nature of one's true Self or *Brahma*; and *manana* means reflecting about the same through reasoning, while the word *nididhyasana* stands for meditation over what has been previously heard and then subjected to, and understood through, the application of one's own rational reflection.¹ These processes, according to Shankara, have got to be repeated over and over again till the knowledge of one's identity with *Brahma* becomes quite clear and gets well-settled in one's mind.²

In modern days distinction has sometimes been made between self-regarding, other-regarding, and ideal-regarding virtues. "The first are conducive to the agent's own good. The second are conducive to the good of others. The third are conducive to the realization of an ideal, viz. Truth, Good, or Beauty."³ No doubt, this distinction is arbitrary and somewhat misleading too. For, as Dr. Sinha has rightly observed, "There is no hard and fast distinction between the individual good and the social good. The virtues which conduce to the individual good also conduce to the social good."⁴ Similarly the so-called self-regarding virtues cannot be really set apart from the ideal-regarding virtues. For even if an ideal be pursued for its own sake, it is always an ideal of an individual and has therefore a necessary bearing on the virtues and good of the individual concerned. It cannot, however, be denied that some virtues are primarily concerned with the individual life, while others with his social life, and that of the former some are more closely connected with the realization of one's highest ideal than are others. For example, of the four cardinal virtues of Plato, viz. courage, temperance, wisdom and justice, temperance may be said primarily to be a virtue of individual life, and justice to be that of social life, while wisdom and courage may be viewed as being more or less equally connected with both of them. Anyway, the *sadhanas* or means of Self-realization, which Shankara has laid so much stress on, can rightly be looked upon as being Self-regarding or ideal-regarding virtues, for they are primarily concerned with the good of an individual and with the realization of the highest ideal of his own life rather than with the good of one's society or humanity as a whole. They may therefore be said to constitute what Prof. Maitra has called subjective morality or psychological ethics of the Hindus,⁵ for their main

1 Ibid.

3 J. N. Sinha; *Ethics*, p. 167.

4 Dr. Sinha; *Ethics*, p. 167.

2 A P., 101; SBS. IV. 1. 1.

5 *The Ethics of the Hindus*, p. 4.

purpose is 'subjective purity and inner excellence of the will' of individuals. But it does not mean that they have no social significance at all. The individual good may, no doubt, be distinguished from social good as such, but it cannot be separated from it. In fact, social good lies in individual good as much as the good of individuals depends upon the good of the society to which they belong. A society apart from its individual members is an abstraction, and so is also social good apart from the good of the individuals. An individual who is good in himself is directly or indirectly good for society as well, just as one who is bad at heart or in mind cannot fail to be a bad member thereof. Whether self-regarding or other-regarding, virtue is after all virtue, much the same as evil is evil. Shankara's specific sadhanas of self realization, therefore, which are undoubtedly primarily concerned with an individual's private life, cannot but be deemed as virtues and as such constituting an ethical aspect of his Brahmadva, subjective though it may be.

Moreover, there is also that ethical aspect of Shankara's Brahmadva which can rightly be said to be objective or social in nature. Shankara, like all other orthodox philosophers of India, has definitely recognized the value of those actions which are technically called Sadharana and varnashrama dharmas. The sadharana or general dharmas are "the common duties of man, the duties that are obligatory on all men equally, irrespective of individual capacity, social status, nationality, or creed."¹ They mainly comprise of satya (speaking the truth), asteya (refraining from theft), akrodha (restraint of anger), kshama (forgiveness), dhairya (steadfastness), shaucha (cleanliness of thought, speech, action and body), dhi (wisdom), vidya (learning), ahimsa (refraining from injury to sentient creatures), brahmacharya (sexual purity or abstinence), and the like.² The varnashrama or vishesha dharmas are the duties which are relative to one's station and status in society. That both these types of duties, sadharana and vishesha, are predominantly social in nature cannot but be admitted. As Prof. Maitra has said they 'together constitute the objective morality of the Hindus, i. e., morality as represented in a code of external acts and requiring outward conformity.'³

It is true that Shankara has not incorporated these duties in his specifically mentioned direct means of Self-realization; but it is not because he did not envisage them as being essential for the realization of

1 The Ethics of the Hindus, p. 1.

2 Ibid. p. 8, 10; and Manusmriti, VI. 92 and X. 63.

3 Ibid. p. 4.

this end, but because they are, according to him, binding on all persons alike. Whether a man aspires after Self-realization or not, he has as man to perform all his duties, sadharana as well as vishesha. The performance of these duties is a necessity of good human life itself. One who transgresses them cannot, according to Shankara, attain even finite happiness here or here-after, nothing to say of attaining the absolute bliss of Self-realization. Shankara has fully endorsed the Katha-Upanishad-view that one who has not perfectly ceased to do, or rather to think of doing, evil deeds and whose mind is not perfectly pure and at peace, cannot obtain his true self through knowledge.¹ Chittashuddhi or purification of mind is as essential for knowledge as knowledge itself is, for Self-realization; and this purification of one's mind, according to Shankara, can be effected only through the performance of one's duties for their own sake, or for the sake of God.² The disinterested performance of these duties, therefore, has been regarded by him as a remote or mediate condition of Self-realization, and not as one that can directly lead to it. Moreover, the fact that Shankara did recognize the due moral worth of our actions also follows from his unquestioned belief in the doctrine of karma. But before we take up his recognition of this doctrine and of the varnashrama-dharmas (under the heading of One's Station in life and its duties), let us devote some space to the consideration of his rejection of what is known as the doctrine of co-ordination or synthesis of knowledge and action.

V—Jnana-karma-samuchchayavada (doctrine of the combination of knowledge and action)

According to Shankara, as we have already seen, the propounding of Brahma is the central theme of all the Upanishadic texts, and jnana or direct vision of one's identity with Brahma, the only direct means of one's liberation from bondage. The performance of any action or actions whatsoever cannot, in his opinion, prove equal to this task. Moksha or liberation, which is with Shankara the same as the being of Brahma (Brahmabhavashcha mokshah), is an ever-accomplished eternal fact,³ and not something created anew, acquired afresh, or modified.⁴ It cannot therefore, be brought about by means of actions, unless they be mediated by the direct knowledge of Brahma, the absolute Reality. Actions, especially when they are disinterested, may pave a part of the way to it, but they cannot constitute that part of the way which directly leads to it.

1 Katha Up. I. 2, 23, and SB. on it.

2 SBG. II. 48, 51; IX. 27; XVIII. 23.

3 SB. Tati. Up. I. 11 (नित्यो हि मोक्षः); SBS. I. 1. 4.

4 Ibid.

For, their effect is always seen to be either the creation, or modification, or change or obtainment of something,¹ but Moksha or Brahma is none of these.² Shankara has therefore categorically denied the efficacy of the karmas or actions as direct and exclusive means of moksha.³ Not only this, he has also vehemently criticized the doctrine of jnana-karmasamuchchaya, according to which "works (karma) and knowledge (jnana) are equally contributory to, i. e., coordinate causes of, Moksha."⁴ This, for example, is the view of the Nyaya-Vaisheshikas, the Ramanujists, etc."⁵ According to them ".....unconditional scriptural works are to be duly accomplished even when knowledge has arisen. They supplement knowledge by training the individual to disinterestedness and dispassion. Such dispassion with the knowledge of the vanity of things temporally quenches the will-to-live according to the Nyaya-vaisheshikas and thereby leads to freedom of Self. According to Ramanujists dispassion is an aid to divine knowledge which by attaining its consummation in Faith and Prema or Love secures freedom by subduing individual self-will and reconciling the individual to the will of the Lord."⁶

But according to Shankara it is vidya or jnana alone which can effect one's moksha or liberation from bondage. It needs no auxiliary to supplement its work. Disinterested performance of one's duties or their dedication to God is, no doubt, admitted by him as being subsidiary to knowledge, in so far as it purifies the mind of the aspirant and thereby prepares the ground for the arousal of emancipating knowledge of one's identity with Brahma; but its value as a direct means of moksha is not acceptable to him. The Samuchchaya or co-ordinate combination of karmas with jnana, Shankara says, is not tenable, because, in the first place, there is opposition between their causes, natures, and effects (hetu-svarupaphalavirodhat) and secondly because, like the knowledge and ignorance of a rope, their co-existence is not possible (sahasambhavanupapattih).⁷ The cause of a karma is attachment, while that of jnana, non-attachment; karmas are jada (bereft of consciousness) in nature, while jnana is self-shining like light; the fruit or effect of karmas is abhyudaya (prosperity), while that of jnana, moksha. Knowledge does not require 'karma' or anything else to supplement it because its effect is

1 SB. Tait. Up. I. 11.

3 SBS. IV. 1. 13.

5 Ibid. p. 282.

7 SB. Isha Up., 18; See also SBG. XVIII. 66; II. 10; III. 1 (Intro.); SB. Kena Up. (Intro.).

2 SBS. I. 1. 4.

4 The Ethics of the Hindus, p. 281.

6 The Ethics of the Hindus, p. 279.

definite and certain.¹ Just as darkness cannot help light in doing its work, so also karma cannot be conceived to help jnana in its work. No help is ever rendered by one's antagonist.² And the antagonism between karmas and jnana (deeds & knowledge) is evidenced by the fact that while the former necessarily involve the feeling of egoity on the part of their doer, the latter is accompanied by the absence of that feeling.³ Moreover, an action or karma is dependent upon its doer, it may be performed or not performed or performed otherwise; but knowledge, on the other hand, is dependent upon the objects known.⁴ In its case there is no freedom to the person concerned. If the object is there and the person concerned has the necessary means of knowing it, he must know it as it is. Shankara therefore holds that the *sa'nuchshaya* (combination) of jnana and karma cannot be established,⁵ for their opposition is as unshakable as a mountain.⁶ But it does not mean that he discredits karmas altogether. Karmas, according to him, have their own place and value. And that it is so we have already seen, and shall further see in connection with his doctrine of deeds and *varnashramadharma*s. Let us, now, proceed to them.

VI—Karmavada or the Doctrine of Deeds

The word 'Karma' is derived from the Sanskrita root 'Kri' which means to do (or to perform an action). Thus, the etymological meaning of this word is 'what is done' or 'an action that is performed.' And as an action may be either physical or mental, the broad sense of the word 'Karma' includes both the physical and mental activities indiscriminately. Though in Vedic times the word 'Karma', as it has been observed by Dr. DasGupta, was "restricted to the performance of Vedic sacrifices,"⁷ and though it is generally taken in its narrow sense of physical or bodily activities only, there seems to be no reason why its meaning should be in any way restricted. Our thoughts and desires which are mental activities are as much an expression of our character as our overt deeds are, and psychologically they leave behind them as enduring and potent impressi-

1 Upadeshasahasri (Padyabhaga) I. 10. (ननु ध्रुवफला विद्या नान्यत्किंचिदपेक्षते)

2 Ibid. I. 11 (Ramatirtha-vyakhya).

3 Vide Upadeshasahasri, (Padya-section) I. 12.

4 Ibid. I 13 (वस्त्वधीना भवेद्विद्या कर्त्रधीनो भवेद्विधिः)

5 SBG. III. 1 (Intro) (अतो ज्ञानकर्मणो समुच्चयानुपपत्तिः)

6 SB. Isha Up., 2 (ज्ञानकर्मणोर्विरोधं पर्वतवदकम्प्यम्)

7 Indian Idealism, p. 2.

ons on our mind as our bodily actions may be said to do. In fact, it is our thoughts, desires, and mental attitudes themselves which make us perform this or that overt deed.¹ And that is probably why the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and Shrimadbhagavadgita speak of desires and mental attitudes respectively as being the essential constituents of an individual's personality.² As a matter of fact, the advocates of the doctrine of karma, as we shall shortly see, do not restrict it to this or that type of actions, but apply it to both physical and mental actions alike.

To state it briefly, the Law of Karma means that all persons reap what they sow. According to it our voluntary actions as well as our thoughts and desires, etc., are never lost to us. Their retribution is sooner or later bound to be experienced by us. We are reaping the fruits of our own deeds, performed by us in our previous birth or births, in our present life, and the actions of our present life will inevitably bear their fruits in our life or lives to come. In the words of Dr. DasGupta, "The law of karma is almost universally regarded as an ethical law by which each person was bound to reap the good and bad effects of his deeds."³ The fruits of the good or bad actions performed by a person have got to be necessarily reaped by him; they will not wear out without being experienced by him even in millions and billions of years.⁴ That mountain, that sky, that ocean, or, that heaven does not exist where one does not reap the fruits of one's own actions.⁵ As Hume has put it, the Law of Karma is generally understood to say that 'according to one's good or bad actions in this life one passes at death into the body of a higher or lower being.'⁶ It is, however, not necessary that the consequences of our present karmas should accrue to us in our next life or lives only, or that, according to this law, our present actions can, under no circumstances, bear their fruits in our present life. Some of our actions may bear their fruits in the present life also, especially if they are too potent to do it.⁷ The doctrine of deeds as such does not preclude the

1 Vide Br. Up. IV. 4. 5.

2 Br. Up. IV. 4. 5 (काममय एवायं पुरुषः)

BG. XVII. 3 (श्रद्धामयोयम् पुरुषः यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः)

3 Indian Idealism, p. 3. 4 (अवश्यमेव भोक्तव्यं कृतं कर्म शुभाशुभम् । नाभुक्तं क्षीयते कर्म कल्पकोटिष्वतरेपि)

5 Yogavasishtha, III. 95. 33 (न स शैलोऽन्तर्मर्माणाम्)

6 R. E. Hume: Intro. to his Trans. of 'Thirteen Principal Upanishads', p. 51,

7 (अत्युत्कटैः पापपुण्यैः इहेव फलमश्नुते ।)

possibility of the retribution of one's actions here and now, although it generally refers to those fruits of actions which human beings are called upon to taste in their future births. Whether it is our actions of previous births or those performed in the present life that are to determine our present joys and sufferings depends upon their relative strength. They fight each other like two rams, of which it is the stronger one that comes out victorious.¹ Thus the advocates of Karmavada do not refuse to believe in the here-and-now efficacy of human actions. Shankara, for one, at least did not deny it. On the other hand, he fully endorsed the Gita view that in this world of men one's (sincere and strenuous) efforts are soon followed by success.²

According to Shankara, the gross body, no doubt, gets dissolved after the death of an individual; but the jiva along with its fine or subtle body migrates to this or that region and then again obtains a body befitting it in accordance with its past thoughts, desires and deeds³. The acquisition of a good or a bad body results from one's own actions⁴. A deed performed by a person never fails to bear its fruit⁵. It is especially the thoughts and desires entertained by a person at the time of his death which determine the nature of his next body⁶. Verily the actions are the cause of the movement of the world-wheel⁷. Through the performance of good actions a person goes to good regions such as heaven; but if his actions have been bad, he will get a hellish place or body to reside in, while the balancing of good and bad actions makes one to reincarnate again as man⁸. The physical body which is the abode of both pleasant and unpleasant experiences is obtained by a person through his own actions⁹. Shankara has, therefore, admonished us not to lament our present lot, but to reconcile ourselves to it; for, we are ourselves, through our own actions, responsible for it¹⁰.

1 Yogavasishtha, II. 6. 10 (द्वौ हुडाविवक्षणात्)

2 BG. IV. 14 (क्षिप्रं हि मानुषे लोके सिद्धिर्भवति कर्मजा ।)

3 SB. Isha Up., 3.

4 SBG. II. 51 (इष्टानिष्टदेहप्राप्तिःकर्मभ्यो जातम् ।)

5 SBG. VI. Intro. (अवश्यं हि कृतं कर्मफलमारभते एव)

6 Ibid. VIII. 6.

7 SBG. III. 13 (जगच्चक्रप्रवृत्तिहेतुः हि कर्म)

8 SB. Prashna Up. III. 7 (पुण्येन कर्मणानयति); also III. 10.

9 Atmabodha, 12.

10 AP., 89 (प्रारब्धमखिलं भुञ्जन्नोद्वेगं कर्तुमर्हति)

Such actions of one's previous birth or births as have begun to bear their fruits are called *prarabdha* karmas or simply *prarabdha*¹. But sometimes man's present good and bad experiences also are designated by this word², simply because they are the effects of one's own *prarabdha* karmas themselves. And in fact there seems to be nothing wrong in it. For, an effect being only a manifested form of its cause may be spoken of in terms of its cause itself. So it has rightly been observed by Swami Vivekananda when he says that the word 'karma' "sometimes means the effects, of which our past actions were the causes"³.

The *Prarabdha* or 'daiva' of Hindus has, therefore, got to be distinguished from the 'fate' of the Christians and from the 'Qismata' of the Islamic culture. As the Christians and the Muslims do not believe in the previous births and actions of an individual, their 'fate' and 'Qismata' respectively are imposed upon them from outside. They must be borne for such is the will of their Creator. The Hindu's '*Prarabdha*', on the other hand, is a creation of one's own actions. There is no '*Prarabdha*' or '*daiva*' apart from one's own previously performed actions⁴. It can be equally made or marred. A person is himself responsible for it. The 'fate' and 'Qismata' are something horrible, something against which our moral consciousness definitely militates. But the idea of '*prarabdha*' in the form of the retribution of our own deeds is quite in keeping with the demand of our sense of justice, and hence not at all appalling. It does not make us feel helpless as the notion of fate or Qismata does. On the other hand, it tends to infuse courage in us and to tone down the evil effects of our losses of various sorts and to keep up our spirits in disheartening conditions: "Though the notion is repellent to western minds as a rule, there is no doubt that to us in the East", as it has been rightly said by Shri S. S. Suryanarayana, "it brings a great deal of comfort and consolation"⁵. That Karma-vada has a salutary effect on the life of a sincere believer in it cannot reasonably be denied. To put it in Prof. Max Muller's words, "its influence on human character has been marvellous. If a man feels that what, without any fault of his own, he suffers in this life can only be the result of some of his own former acts, he will bear his suffering with more resignation, like a debtor who is paying off an old debt. And if he

1 Ibid. 92; *Yogavasishtha*, II. 6. 35; SBS. IV. 1. 15.

2 *Yogavasishtha*, II. 9. 4 (शुभाशुभार्थसम्पत्तिर्देवशब्देन कथ्यते)

3 *Karmayoga*, p. 1.

4 *Yogavasishtha*, II. 6. 4.

5 *Phil. Quarterly*, April, 1940, p. 81.

knows besides that in this life he may by suffering not only pay off his old debts, but actually lay by moral capital for the future, he has a motive for goodness"¹. And that it must be really so is apparent from Shankara's own words when he says that 'a person should perform only good actions and should acquire only good knowledge, etc., because it is the knowledge, actions and wisdom of his own previous life which are the means of his attaining a subsequent body and its enjoyments'².

One may, however, ask the question; 'how can the deeds of a person's past birth bear fruit in his present life which is separated from the previous one by a wide gulf of unknown time existing between them?' Of course, to one who does not believe in the immortality of soul and in the enduring nature of its impressions this question may present an insurmountable difficulty. But to Shankara, as to so many other thinkers in India, it is so easy to answer this question. According to him all our experiences, volitional or otherwise, leave their traces or impressions with us. The actual experiences are, no doubt, passing occurrences. But their after-effects, it is believed, remain with us and enter deep into our inner psychical self from where they continue to play an important part in determining our future behaviour and experiences too. No experience, good or bad, is lost for ever. In some form or the other it continues to be retained, if not on the conscious level, at least in the deep and dark unconscious regions of one's mind.

Freud, the famous psycho-analyst of dreams, seems to have rightly compared the unconscious mind to the deep waters of an ocean while the conscious mind to its visible surface only. And in view of what he and others of his school of thought have said about the potency of our unconscious desires it does not seem to be impossible that the 'samskaras' or impressions of one's actual deeds or desires should continue to remain with one even after the dissolution of one's gross body. Our inability to remember them cannot certainly be urged as a proof of their absence. For, as Freud has shown, they are there even when they cannot be recalled. It is true, no doubt, that the psycho-analysts do not say anything about soul's existence here or here-after. Really speaking, to do so is beyond the scope of psychology as it is now understood. But what the psycho-analysts have maintained about our present psychical life may undoubtedly be urged as a fact that at least points to the possibility of the retention of our 'samskaras' even after the dissolution of the present

1 TLVP., p. 165.

2 SB. Br. Up. IV. 4. 2.

gross body. If the subtlety and vastness of one's mind is really so great as Freud has pictured it, and if the retention of the repressed or suppressed desires even of one's early childhood is not an enigma but a proved fact, why should the retention of one's *vasanas* or *samskaras* of previous birth be inconceivable for one who believes in the transmigration of an immortal soul, possessed of a subtle body, not made of gross elements but of an extremely super-fine stuff, which is capable of existing apart from and independently of the gross-body ? Any way, Shankara at least did not entertain any doubt about it. His inference of One's previous birth and its impressions from the contents of one's experiences in a dream-state, in fact, seems very much like Freud's own procedure of probing into one's repressed desires on the basis of the analysis of one's dreams. As he says, one's previous birth is indicated by one's experiencing or seeing in dreams such objects as are not seen or experienced in one's present waking-life. Dreams being due to '*vasanas*' and not arising out of one's sense-contact with external objects, and *vasanas* in turn being possible only of such objects as have been actually experienced, it seems, Shankara says, quite reasonable to posit their experience either in the present life itself or in a previous birth of the person concerned¹. The fact that persons begin to take instinctive delight in certain things from their very infancy is also, to Shankara, an adequate indication of their previous births and of the fact of their old *vasanas* sticking to them in the form of their vague impressions or *samskaras*². Endorsing the view of a certain *smṛiti* Shankara has explicitly maintained that "To whatever actions certain of these animated beings had turned in a former creation, to the same they turn when created again and again.....influenced by them they proceed; hence a certain person delights in actions of a certain kind"³. It is in keeping with one's *samskaras* and '*vasanas*' that one is driven on to this or that form of existence here or elsewhere⁴.

But '*vasanas*' or '*samskaras*' alone, as Shankara has rightly believed, are not enough. They being '*jada*' (unconscious) cannot by themselves prove equal to the task of taking a person to that place or body which he

1 Vide SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 9, and SB. Prashna Up. IV. 5 (दृष्टं.....अनुभूतम्)

2 SBG. VII. 20 (स्वभावेन जन्मान्तराजितसंस्कारविशेषेण...); SB. Br. Up. IV. 4. 2 (पूर्वानुभव.....उपपद्यते)

3 SBS. I. 3. 30 (Thibaut's Trans.) (compare Nyaya-sutra III. 1. 21 and Yoga-sutra, II. 9).

4 Vide SB. Br. Up. IV. 4. 2.

has earned through his deeds and desires. Shankara, therefore, like Kant, has postulated God's mediation to make it possible for the Law of Karma to operate. God, according to him, is the distributor of the fruits of persons' actions to them¹. It is He who synthesizes happiness with virtue and sufferings with vice. The Jains, the Buddhists, the Mimamsakas, and some followers of the Samkhya System too, do not, of course, feel the necessity of positing God even for this purpose. For them the Law of Karma itself is quite enough to do this work. But according to Shankara a non-intelligent thing, like the Law of Karma, is not, without the guidance of an intelligent ruler, capable of performing the complicated task of bringing about harmony between the different deeds of different persons on the one hand and their appropriate fruition on the other². A moral law, as the Law of Karma is, looks to an end or purpose. And its having a purpose or looking to an end is not, in the opinion of Shankara, possible without there being an intelligent guide of it³. He has therefore viewed this law as operating under the universal lordship of the omniscient and omnipotent God, and not by itself⁴. So, for Shankara, believing as he does in enduring subtle bodies of immortal souls, in the inexorable Law of Karma, and in the omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent Lord, there is no difficulty pertaining to the question 'how can actions of one's previous birth bear their fruits in one's present or future birth ?'

One may, however, come forward and urge that 'if karmas, both past and present, do not fail to bear their fruits, they will give rise to birth after birth and will thus make moksha or liberation from bondage impossible. For, in order to live a person must act⁵, and as a result of his actions he must have birth and life again and again'. But with Shankara there is no difficulty on this account as well. According to him the actions of that person alone who is impelled to perform them by a desire for their fruits and who identifies himself with his body and mind, etc., are capable of keeping him in bondage⁶. Even actions of binding nature cease to bind him who performs them with a cognition of equality⁷. The karmas bind those persons only who feel that they are doers

1 SBG. VII. 22; VIII. 9; IX. 17 (कर्मफलस्य प्राणिभ्यो विधाता);

SBS. III. 2. 38 (कर्मानुरूपं फलं सम्पादयति)

2 Vide SBS. II. 2. 1.

3 Vide SBS. II. 2. 1.

4 Vide SBG. VII. 12.

5 BG. III. 5; III. 8, and XVIII. 11.

6 SBG. II. 47 (यदा हि कर्मफलतृष्णाप्रयुक्तः.....जन्मनो हेतुः भवेत्)

7 SBG. II. 50 (बन्धस्वभावान्यपि.....निवर्तन्ते)

and who experience a desire for their performance and fruits¹. One who is unattached to their fruits and is free from the feeling of egoity is not bound down by them². Shankara has fully endorsed the Gita view that true knowledge burns the seeds of all actions³, and that the actions sincerely dedicated to God also lose their potency of binding their doer⁴. So, the Law of Karma, it is believed, does not operate in the case of the knowers of Brahma.⁵

As to the origin and antiquity of the Law of Karma Dr. DasGupta has observed that it "had its origin in the belief in the magical efficacy of the sacrificial performance, and that 'the substitution of all kinds of deeds for sacrificial ones was an easy thing in the process of time, and the unalterability of efficacy that was associated with sacrificial deeds was thus easily transferred to deeds in general'"⁶. According to Prof. Hume this doctrine of deeds is not found in Rigveda. He says that "It is note-worthy that in the Rigveda the eschatology consisted of a belief in a personal immortality in the paradise of gods. After a preliminary sign of the doctrine of metempsychosis in the Atharva-Veda, the notion first makes its definite appearance in the Shatapath-Brahmana"⁷. There is, however, ample evidence to show that the sages and seers of the Upanishads were fully conversant with the doctrine of karma exactly as we now understand it⁸. Hume has himself admitted that the sages of the Upanishads had 'the belief that the thoughts and deeds of one earthly life will have their fruition in a subsequent embodiment in the physical world (after an interval in excarnate existence)'⁹. Thus we see that the belief in the full-fledged Law of Karma is at least as old as the Upanishadic culture, if not older. And the Jains and the Buddhists had entertained it at least some twelve centuries before the days of Shankara. Shankara's elucidation of it, while considerably different from the hetero-dox view of it, is in perfect conso-

1 Ibid. IV. 12 (येषां ... लिम्पन्ति)

2 Ibid VII. 12.

3 BG. IV. 37, 19 and SB. on them.

4 Vide SBG. IX. 27, 28.

5 Vide AP., 91, 92, 93, 97 and 99; SBS. IV. 1. 14, 15; Br. Up. VI. 2. 15; Prashna Up. I. 10; Mund. Up. II. 2. 8; Katha Up. III. 15; Shvet. Up. I. 7; Chh. Up. IV. 14. 3 and SB. on them.

6 Indian Idealism, p. 3.

7 An Outline of the Phil. of the Up., p. 54.

8 See Chh. Up. V. 10. 7; Katha Up. V. 7; Mund. Up. I. 2. 7, 9, 10, 12; III. 2. 2; Isha Up. 3; Br. Up. IV. 4. 5-6; VI. 2. 16.

9 An Outline of the Phil. of the Up., p. 55.

nance with the ancient sages' view of it. The Jains and the Buddhists have no belief in God, and the latter in no permanent soul as well; but Shankara like the sages of the Upanishads believes in both of them.

As a matter of fact, permanence of soul is as necessary a postulate of the Law of Karma as God is. For, unless permanence is conceded to the soul, the Law of Karma loses all its significance. If the enjoyments and sufferings of our present life are viewed as being the necessary consequences of our own actions of previous births we must have existed prior to this life to have performed them. Similarly we must continue to exist after the dissolution of the present gross body, birth after birth, so that our deeds performed in this life and in the subsequent ones may not go unretributed. To believe in the Law of Karma is thus to believe in a beginningless and endless soul. The belief in its immortality alone is not enough. The belief in an immortal but created soul cannot be justified. In the words of Shri Aurobindo the Christian conception of the created but immortal soul involves "two paradoxes which need more justification before they can ever be accorded any consideration, first, the hourly creation of beings who have a beginning in time but no end in time, and are, moreover, born by the birth of the body, but do not end by the death of the body; secondly, their assumption of a ready-made mass of combined qualities, virtues, vices, capacities, defects, temperamental and other advantages and handicaps, not made by them at all through growth, but made for them by arbitrary fiat, if not by law of heredity—yet for which and for the perfect use of which they are held responsible by their creator"¹. Moreover, "If the soul was created to animate the body, if it depended on the body for its coming into existence, it can have no reason or basis for existence after the disappearance of the body. It is naturally to be supposed that the breath or power given for the animation of the body would return at its final dissolution to its Maker. If, on the contrary, it still persists as an immortal embodied being, there must be a subtle or psychic body in which it continues, and it is fairly certain that this psychic body and its inhabitant must be pre-existent to the material vehicle : it is irrational to suppose that they were created originally to inhabit that brief and perishable form; an immortal being cannot be the outcome of so ephemeral an incident in creation. If the soul remains but in a disembodied condition, then it can have had no original dependence on a body for its existence; it must have subsisted as an unembodied spirit before birth even as it persists in its disembodied spiritual entity after death"².

1 The Life Divine, Vol. II. p. 686.

2 The Life Divine, Vol. II. p. 687.

If the immortality of the soul is a postulate of morality, as Kant believed, its beginninglessness is no less a postulate of it. If the sense of justice in us, or Kant's Practical Reason, requires that our good and bad actions should have their proper reward and punishment respectively, if not in this life, in a life to come after the dissolution of the present body, it is also the voice of the same Practical Reason, or Sense of justice, that our present joys and sufferings also must be the rewards and punishments of our own deeds performed by us prior to coming into existence in the present body. So the doctrine of deeds rightly presupposes both the beginninglessness and immortality of the soul. And the belief in this doctrine seems to be quite rational.

In the first place, this doctrine seems to be a corollary of the Law of Causation itself, and is quite in conformity with the Law of Conservation of Energy as well. It "fits in with our attempts at a harmonious understanding of the natural world. In the desire to resolve the elusive problem of change we light upon the dogma of causality that nothing occurs without a cause, that the same cause has the same effect and that the same effect has the same cause. Quite in conformity with this is the devout belief that virtue triumphs, while vice fails, and that any appearance to the contrary can and should be accounted for by tracing each triumph or failure sufficiently far back to our appropriate virtue or vice"¹. The Law of Karma "is a mere extension of the reign of law and the postulate of causation to the sphere of human conduct - a natural corollary of the belief that nothing in the universe is a matter of chance and caprice"². If the Law of Causation universally holds good of all the phenomena of nature why should one not be justified in extending its application to the realm of the moral world? Moreover, as Prof. Max Muller has rightly observed "The belief that no act, whether good or bad, can be lost, is only the same belief in the moral world as our belief in the preservation of force is in the physical world"³. "If all force is indestructible why should moral force be an exception?"⁴ To Shankara, it seems, the indestructibility of moral force is as good a fact as the indestructibility of any other force. While finding it to be unreasonable to

1 Philosophical Quarterly, April, 1910, p. 81 ('Karma and Fatalism' by S. S. Suryanarayan).

2 Ibid. April, 1932, p. 72 ('Sanatana Dharma' by Prof. N. Venkataraman).

3 TLVP., p. 165,

4 Philosophical Quarterly, April, 1932, p. 72 ('Sanatana Dharma' by Prof. N. Venkataraman).

reconcile himself to the ideas of 'kritavipranasha and akritabhyagama' (i. e. destruction of what has been done and the accruing of what has not been done by a person)¹, he is at once a believer in the Law of Conservation of force and in the Law of Causation.

Secondly, the Law of Karma meets a clear demand of moral reason. As Mr. Mackenzie has rightly observed, "We naturally think that a man should be rewarded according to his deeds. And this idea seems to have a rational justification. The virtuous man is fighting on the side of human progress, and we feel it natural to expect that the gods will fight with him, and that his labours will prosper. The vicious man, on the other hand, is fighting against the gods, against our ideals of right; and it seems unnatural and unreasonable that his course should prosper. If for a time the virtuous man is unsuccessful, we yet feel bound to believe that his ultimate reward cannot 'be dust.' On the other hand, if the wicked for a time seems to flourish, we cannot help believing that his triumph is ephemeral, that in the long run the wages of sin must be death."² As a matter of fact, our mind militates against the idea of inappropriate return, or of no return at all, of our deeds. And so the doctrine of deeds seems to be a clear verdict of our moral reason itself. Why should we then fight shy of acknowledging it ? If a virtuous man is sooner or later bound to prosper and if dust and death are, in the long run, to be the wages of sin, why should not our present prosperity and sufferings be deemed to be the reward and wages of our own past virtues and sins respectively ? Is it not as irrational to believe that our happiness and sorrows are merely accidental or arbitrarily imposed affairs as is to think that our vices will ultimately triumph and will bring us perfectly good luck whereas our virtues are ultimately bound to lead us to destruction and disaster ? Do we not feel that it is sinful and unjust to inflict pain on one who has done nothing to earn it ? Unless one believes that the world is founded on injustice one cannot but acquiesce in the view that our present joys and sorrows must both be the due consequences of our own past deeds. In the words of Prof. Venkataraman, "...either we must believe that there is no ultimate Law of Righteousness governing the universe, or we must conclude that the particular conditions that govern one's life, from its commencement, and all the ups and downs-in the way

1 SBG. VIII. 18 (अकृताभ्यागम-कृतविप्रणाशदोषपरिहारार्थम्.....)

2 A Manual of Ethics, p. p. 428-29; See also Rashdall's 'The Theory of Good And Evil', Vol. II, p. 200.

of success and failure, joy and sorrow, are the outcome and natural sequence of prior actions that have justly earned us the particular kind of life and destiny, and not another.....unless this claim for justice and desert can be satisfied, one is bound to end in moral scepticism.”¹

Those who do not believe in the Law of Karma cannot defend their God, if they really have faith in one, against the charge of injustice and cruelty. It is the only hypothesis that can reasonably protect the fairness and justness of God from impairment.² Capricious will of God hopelessly fails to accord with the sense of justice in us. The fact that difficulties of this sort are removed by the ‘theory of pre-existence’ could not be denied even by Prof. Rashdall, who is otherwise not prepared to accept it.³

Thirdly, the Law of Karma seems to be, in Prof. Hume’s words, “...a most plausible philosophic explanation of instinctive knowledge and of dreaming and remembrance of things not experienced in this life, as well as of sin.....these are exactly the considerations which led philosophers like Plato, and Christian theologians like Origen and Julius Muller to the belief in an existence prior to the present life.”⁴ Of course, the psychologists describe instincts as ‘racial habits’; but so to describe them does not throw more or better light on their origin than to attribute them to the enduring impressions of one’s own experiences of previous existence does. If the latter hypothesis is unverifiable, the former too, truly speaking, cannot be scientifically verified. Nevertheless the latter is certainly more intelligible than the former.

That we remember nothing about our actions of previous birth or births is no point against the Law of Karma. When we cannot remember anything about the first two or three years of our present life itself what wonder is there if we fail to recall anything about our previous birth? Moreover, if what has sometimes appeared in news-papers is true, there is, then, positive evidence of previous birth and of its remembrance too.⁵

1 Philosophical Quarterly (April, 1932), p. 73.

2 Vide SBS. II. 1. 34—35.

3 The Theory of Good And Evil, Vol. II. p. 345.

4 An Outline of the Phil. of the Ups., p. 55.

5 See ‘The Leader’, October 1, and September 23, 1926 (the news was published by Shri Shyam Sunder Lal, the Station-master of Haldwani, about his four years old daughter who could tell a few things about her previous birth) Quoted in ‘Karmavada aur Janmantara’

VII. One's Station in Life and Its Duties

"Human beings do not drop from the clouds. Men are born with particular aptitudes and in a particular environment; and they generally find their sphere of activity marked out for them, within pretty narrow limits. They find themselves fixed in a particular station, helping to carry forward a general system of life; and their chief duties are connected with the effective execution of their work."¹ These words of Mr. Mackenzie give, in a way, a beautiful exposition of the central idea of Mr. Bradley's Essay 'My Station and its Duties.' Each person occupies a certain position in the society in which he lives; and each position or place in the society has certain duties appropriate to it. Though objective our duties are certainly relative to the respective functions which, by virtue of our different positions in the society, we are called upon to perform. In Mr. Bradley's words "I and every one else must have some station with duties pertaining to it, and those duties do not depend on our opinion or liking. Certain circumstances, a certain position, call for a certain course.....in my station my particular duties are prescribed to me, and I have them whether I wish to or not."²

A society, though not literally an organism, is very much like it, and its members bear in a way a close resemblance to the organs thereof. We are members one of another and our individual interests are served in the realization of the interests of all. The interest of all, however, can be realized only in and through the realization of the individual interests. A society by itself does not exist. It exists in and through its individual members only. No doubt, society is something quite concrete and real, probably as old as the individuals themselves are, all the same it has no centre of consciousness of its own. Its centres of consciousness lie definitely within its constituent members. It is therefore through the conscious efforts of the individuals alone that their own well-being in particular and the well-being of the society in general can be realized. And it can be best done only when the individuals fulfil their own functions.

Each individual, no doubt, has his own peculiarities and bent of mind. His mental make-up, no less than his physical constitution and facial expression, differs from that of other persons. Nevertheless, the individuals can be conveniently grouped into different classes. And it is probably in the interest of society as well as in the interest of the indivi-

1 A Manual of Ethics, p. 372. -

2 Ethical Studies ,p. 176 (second edition).

duals themselves so to group them. Plato, for one, seriously thought of it, and even modern psychologists who have rightly recognized the fact of manifold individual differences have attempted their classification into some types. Generally they have classified individuals into three main types, viz., the men of thought, the men of action and the men of feeling. The scientists, the philosophers, and the like, it is said, belong to the first type, the soldiers, generals, politicians, etc., to the second, and the poets, the musicians, and such others, to the third type. Some such classification is really very desirable. Every person is not meant for every walk of life. You cannot take the work of a donkey from a dog or the work of a dog from a donkey. A misfit in life is a failure in life. 'To work along the grain' is certainly more convenient and efficient than to work against it. Disappointment is the desert of one who would attempt to take 'a silk purse out of a sow's ear.' Much like the different organs of an organism we are more fit for one job rather than for another.

It was probably some such consideration present in the minds of the Vedic sages who for the first time chalked out the scheme of classifying persons into the well-known four Varnas, viz., Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.¹ The special virtues and duties of a Brahmana mainly consist of 'tranquility, sense-restraint, purity of body and mind, penance, forgiveness, straightness, acquisition of knowledge (both ontological and wordly), faith in the scriptures, and the imparting of instructions'; those of a Kshatriya, in 'heroism, spiritedness, fortitude, efficiency or tact, bravery in fighting, charity and supremacy; of a Vaishya in agriculture, tending the cattle, trade and commerce; while service in general is said to be the main duty of a Shudra.² Besides this scheme of classification of human beings there is another scheme of their classification according to the distinctly marked stages of their life called 'Brahmacharyashrama, Grihasthashrama, Vanaprasthashrama and Sanyasashrama,'³ each ashrama or stage lasting for a period of approximately twenty-five years. The Brahmacharyashrama is the period of preparation, both physical and mental, for the next three stages of one's life. Before one can settle as a householder and take on his shoulders the responsibilities thereof, one undoubtedly needs a good deal of learning. The first period of one's

1 Vide Rigveda; Purushasukta, 13 (ब्राह्मणोऽस्य.....शूद्रोऽजायत)

2 Vide BG. XVIII. 42-44 and SB. on them; Manusmriti I. 88-91, and AHIP. Vol. II, p. 593.

3 Manusmriti, VI. 87.

life, viz., Brahmacharyashrama is, therefore, to be mainly devoted to learning or acquisition of knowledge and to the service of one's preceptor.¹ The duties of a householder (grihastha) are really manifold and of diverse nature. He has not only to look to his family but also to attend to many social and other problems, keeping, of course, in view his own intellectual and moral advancement. Of all the ashramas the grihasthashrama is said to be the best or most important because the subsistence of persons belonging to the other three ashramas depends upon a grihastha or householder.² After grihasthashrama comes the stage of retirement (vanaprasthashrama).³ At this stage a person is required to leave his house and to go, along with his wife, on pilgrimage, or to live in a forest. There he gets more time to devote himself to the study of the scriptures and to the other means of self-perfection, such as forbearance, endurance, benevolence, kindness, and the like.⁴ And this prepares him for the fourth and the last stage of his life, viz., sanyasashrama or the stage of renunciation. A sanyasin or ascetic has to concentrate all his mind on his spiritual upliftment,⁵ as well as on the good of others.⁶

Both these schemes of Varnashrama-dharmas have been duly recognized by Shankara.⁷ But so far as the knowledge of Brahma is concerned he has not restricted it to any particular varna (caste) or stage of life. The temple of his Truth is open to all.⁸ "The divine inspiration is possible every-where and to every soul."⁹ Whosoever really hungers and thirsts for the darshana or vision of his true Self can have it. What is required is to qualify oneself for it; and, in the opinion of Shankara, any person belonging to any walk or stage of life may do so. The performance of Varnashrama-dharmas is, of course, according to him, an aid to the requisite means of the knowledge or vision of the universal Self or Brahma.¹⁰ A person who performs the duties appropriate to his varna and ashrama acquires a great moral merit.¹¹ The duties of one's varna and ashrama are said to be the means of not only one's prosperity but also of the Highest Good.¹² Ordinarily, the performance of one's varnashrama-

1 Vide SBG. VI. 14; Manusmriti, II. 238, 182.

2 Manusmriti VI. 89.

3 Ibid. VI. 1.

4 Ibid. VI. 8.

5 Ibid. VI. 96.

6 SBG. V. 25.

7 SBG. II. 31; IV. 13; XVIII. 42-45; SBS. III. 4. 38; SB. Chh. Up. II 23. 1.

8 Vide SBS. III. 4. 36-38.

9 M. N. Sircar; Hindu Mysticism, p. 11.

10 AP., 3 (स्ववर्णश्रमधर्मेण चतुष्टयम्) 11 Tattvopadesha, 75.

12 SBG. IV. 7 (धर्मस्य बभ्युदयनिःश्रेयसाधनस्य)

dharmas leads one to prosperity and heaven, etc. But, if it is dedicated to God without aiming at the acquisition of any fruit, it results in one's purification; and a person whose mind and heart get purified acquires the necessary ability for knowledge which, in turn, becomes the means of his attaining the highest good of his life.¹ He who performs such actions as are in keeping with his inner nature obtains no sin.² No person, therefore, is to think in terms of neglecting those actions which are native to his nature even if they apparently be of inferior type.³ A person who understands his station in life correctly and performs its duties wholeheartedly achieves the greatest success of his life.⁴ Thus the morality of the actions of one's ashrama and varna may be said to lie not so much in the actions themselves as in the spirit with which they are performed. In fact, no profession or occupation is in itself ethically good or bad. The moral value of a person's professional or occupational work depends upon how he does it. If he does it with all his mind and heart he is a good man; but if he does it half-heartedly it is not only his work but morality also that suffers. In the words of Prof. Muirhead "An artisan or artist or writer who does not do his best is not only an inferior workman but a bad man."⁵ The desirability of making a right choice of one's profession and, then, of executing its functions to the best of one's ability has been nicely expressed by Carlyle when he says: 'know what thou canst work at, and work at it like a Hercules.'⁶ The entire gist of 'Varnashrama dharmas' or of 'One's Station in life and its duties' may be said to be contained in Carlyle's another famous saying: 'Do the duty that lies nearest thee.' A person who does his work as best as he can is undoubtedly a very useful member of his society of which he may be said to be as essential an ingredient as an organ is of an organism. The social and moral value of Varnashrama dharmas, therefore, cannot be questioned at all. As Prof. Hiriyanna has rightly observed the Varnashrama-dharmas or karmas "...are what are incumbent upon man in his relation to society and their chief value consists in the reference they involve to general well-being. As distinguished from Kamya-karmas which are primarily intended to serve the good of the individual, these emphasise his dependence upon his environment and point out his obligation to it. They are accordingly

1 SBG. Intro. (अभ्युदयार्थः...निःश्रेयसहेतुत्वं...)

2 BG. XVIII. 47 and SB. on it.

3 Ibid. XVIII. 48 and SB. on it.

4 Ibid. XVIII. 45 and SB. on it.

5 Elements of Ethics, p. 47.

6 Quoted in Dr. Sinha's 'Ethics' (1941), p. 164.

very well suited to be the means of rationalising his first impulses and make him altruistic by enlarging his vision. It is true that they cannot help him to overcome selfishness altogether; that help can be rendered only by jnana or spiritual enlightenment. But their value is not the less on that account, for without the preliminary moral training which they alone can afford, there will not be the needed fitness to receive that enlightenment. Their value, as a means of Self-realization, may not be the highest, but it is the next best and that is what is meant when they are described as 'aradupakaraka' or 'distantly conducive' to moksha."¹ In the words of Prof. S. K. Maitra "The Varnashramadharma.....represent a code of relative duties and constitute the relativistic ethics of the Hindus. It comprises the ethics of sociality as well as the ethics of individual capacity.....The basis of the classification according to Ashrama.....is the genetic view of the moral life, and the importance, psychological as well as ethical, of such a view cannot be too much emphasised."²

VIII Freedom of the individual souls or jivas

As Kant rightly believed, freedom of the individual soul is as essential a postulate of morality as its immortality and God are. Morality is as meaningless without an 'ought', as an 'ought' is, without a 'can'. No person who is not free to act can rightly be held to be responsible for his conduct. In fact, if he has no freedom to act no conduct can really be called his conduct. One who believes in man's moral responsibility cannot but believe in his freedom of action also. So, from what we have seen about Shankara's stress on morality in the form of both Sadharana and varnashrama dharma it necessarily follows that he must be a believer in the freedom of individual persons. Moreover, his firm belief in the Law of Karma should leave in the minds of his readers no room for any doubt about his belief in their freedom of action. For, freedom of action and one's responsibility for what one does are the very essence of this law. All Vedic prescriptions and prohibitions which Shankara has so well recognized will lose all their significance unless freedom of action is conceded to the individuals who are to be guided by them.

There are, however, some assertions of Shankara himself which, if taken by themselves and without due regard to what he has maintained elsewhere, may be mistaken for his denial of freedom to individual human

1 M. Hiriyanna; Intro. to Na'shkarmya-Siddhi, edited by Col. G. A. Jacob, 1925 p. p. XXI—XXII

2 S. K. Maitra; The Ethics of the Hindus, p. 1.

beings. For instance, he has maintained, in his commentary on Gita, Adhyaya III, Shloka 33, that all persons, including the learned ones, act according to their nature which consists of their *samskaras* (impressional tendencies) engendered by their good and bad actions of previous life and manifested in the present life (without being acquired in it). And then, in his commentary on Brahma-Sutra, I. 1. 28, Shankara has openly accepted the Upanishadic view that Ishvara (God) makes that person perform good deeds whom He wants to take upward from these worlds, while He himself causes that individual to perform wrong actions whom He wants to send below them. Now, both these assertions of Shankara a determinist may adduce in support of his own denial of freedom of action to an individual and may say that Shankara who believed in the determination of one's present actions by one's innate nature or through the agency of the omniscient and omnipotent Lord could not be a believer in an individual's freedom of action. But in view of Shankara's strong advocacy of the Law of Karma and of the *sadharana* and *varnashrama dharma*s, as we have said before, one is necessarily called upon to pause and reflect before one acquiesces in the view of a determinist.

Whatever may be said in favour of a determinist's view it cannot be denied that it not only cuts at the very root of morality but also comes into direct conflict with our feeling of freedom which our moral consciousness is invariably accompanied with. Either morality and moral consciousness will have to be viewed as mere myths or mental chimeras or human freedom to act shall have to be recognized as an undeniable fact. Whosoever stands or means to stand by morality will have to take freedom for his stand. Otherwise his morality will forsake him and he as a moral being will inevitably fall down. Shankara, therefore, staunch advocate of morality as he is, cannot be a determinist in the strict sense. So far as his deterministic assertions above-referred to are concerned it may be said that he has himself made it clear that he does not thereby mean to deny the fact of individual freedom. And this we clearly find when we go through his commentary on shloka 34 of Gita Adhyaya III itself. In fact, he has himself stated the determinist's point of view in the form of a rejoinder from the side of his opponent, to the end of his commentary on shloka 33, and then replied to it in the commentary on the following shloka, in order to ward off the possibility of being misunderstood for a determinist. The opponent's rejoinder is. If all *jivas* act in accordance with their nature, and if there is none who has not his own nature, then, there remaining no room for a person to will his acts, the scriptures will lose all their significance and purpose. Now, Shankara's reply to it is

that 'what is called a person's nature makes him undertake a particular act only when preceded by the feelings of attachment and aversion; and thereupon the person concerned transgresses his own duties and does what does not belong to him. But if (lit. when) a person controls his attachment and aversion, he adopts the view of the scriptures and is freed from the thralldom of his nature.' Thus Shankara sees in man the freedom to control and overpower his nature. Our impulsive tendencies are, no doubt, very strong, probably stronger than the mere ideal presentation of an end; but if an effort of strong and sincere will, as W. James would say, is conjoined to this ideal presentation its strength exceeds that of the impulsive tendency, and then the person concerned succeeds in doing what he thinks to be desirable in a particular situation. And this means that a person, though working under the influence of his natural tendencies, has in his essential nature the freedom to determine the course of his present and future career and conduct.

As to God's making us act rightly or wrongly Shankara, following Shrimadbhagavadgita, has explicitly maintained that He is perfectly equal to all beings and that there is none whom He hates or loves,¹ and that He neither makes persons do this or that deed nor does he create deeds for them.² Men, according to him, have a right to desire and act in their own ways; they seek the fruits of their actions and, having the right to act according to their respective varnas and ashramas, perform actions, the fruits of which they reap without much delay.³ God is just like rain-water which makes the seeds the different persons sow to take root and grow. The real responsibility of sowing them lies with the persons concerned. And this is exactly the meaning of 'God's making us act rightly or wrongly.' If interpreted otherwise this assertion of Shankara would contradict all that he has maintained about not only an individual's freedom to make or mar his human life but also about God's equality, justice and kindness, etc., to all creatures alike. Shankara's belief in individuals' freedom cannot only be gleaned from hundreds of his assertions,⁴ but is also found explicitly expressed in his commentary on all the sutras from 33 to 39 of Adhyaya II, pada 3.

1 BG. and SBG. IX. 29.

2 Ibid. V. 14.

3 SBG. IV. 12.

4 See SBS. I. 2. 12; I. 1. 1; II. 1. 2; II. 3. 17; SB. Isha Up. 2; SB. Katha Up.

II. 2; SBG. II. 45, 46, 61; III. 7-9, 20, 25, 30, 41, 42; VI. 5, 6, 10; Tattvopadesha, 78, 79.

IX Is an aspiration after the knowledge of one's true Self or Brahma not possible ?

It has been maintained here that according to Shankara the highest good of a person consists in the attainment of Brahmahood which is the same as the realization of one's true or ultimate Self. But one may object to it and point out that the very aspiration after Brahma is not possible or that Brahma being ubiquitous the very question of its attainment does not arise. In fact, Shankara has himself raised and considered this objection in both these forms, in the first form in his commentary on the Brahma-Sutra (I. 1. 1.) and in the other in his commentary on the Taittiriya Upanishad (II. 1). Let us see how he has tried to meet this objection.

To take up the objection in its first form and put it in Shankara's own way, it may be urged that 'Brahma is either known or not known. If Brahma is already known, it does not deserve to become an object of one's desire, and if it is not known it is not possible for one to entertain a desire to enter into an enquiry concerning it'¹. This argument is, however, not sound. Like many other dilemmas of its kind it is, of course, formally valid; but its material validity may very well be challenged. It is, no doubt, true that there is no sense in trying to know what is already, clearly and perfectly, known, and also that one cannot proceed to make an enquiry into the nature of that thing which is not known at all. But it is not necessary that a thing must always be either perfectly known or unknown. It cannot be denied that in many cases our knowledge of things is rather vague, partial, or superficial. And when such is the case, there is certainly a room for enquiry. If Brahma were either perfectly known or unknown, then, of course, an aspiration after it could be ruled out of question. But, as Shankara has maintained, it is neither perfectly known nor perfectly unknown to the aspirant. Brahma, according to Shankara, is the very Self of all, and so it cannot be said to be altogether unknown. For everybody feels that he is, and no-body ever thinks that he is not². Thus in the consciousness of our own existence the existence of Brahma is a familiar fact with every one of us. Moreover, the knowledge of the existence and nature of Brahma, Shankara has maintained, is also obtainable from the Vedas and other scriptures which describe it as a perfectly and eternally pure 'being' endowed with all knowledge, power, and so on³. This being so, it cannot be correct to maintain that Brahma is not

1 SBS. I. 1. 1.

2 SBS. I. 1. 1.

3 Ibid.

known at all. But this knowledge of Brahma can certainly not be said to be a matter of one's clear and indubitable experience, especially in view of there being many conflicting opinions about the special nature of the self. For instance, 'the Lokayatikas are of opinion that the mere body endowed with the quality of intelligence is the Self, others, that the organs endowed with intelligence are the Self; others maintain that the internal organ is the Self; others, again, that it is the Void. Others, again (to proceed to the opinion of such as acknowledge the authority of the Veda), maintain that there is a transmigrating being different from the body, and so on, which is both agent and enjoyer (of the fruits of actions); others teach that that being is enjoying only, not acting; others believe that in addition to the individual souls, there is an all-knowing, all-powerful Lord. Others, finally, maintain that the Lord is the Self or the enjoyer''¹. It being so any person may reasonably ask as to what the true nature of his Self really is. So the aspiration after Self-realization or the knowledge of Brahma, Shankara would say, is quite in conformity with the facts as they are, and there is nothing that bars out its possibility.

The aspiration after the realization or attainment of one's true Self or Brahma, Shankara has shown, cannot be ruled out also on the ground of its ubiquity; for, in spite of the fact that Brahma is ubiquitous and the true Self of all, we are somehow not actually conscious of it. The attainment of Brahma is dependent on one's vision, and its non-attainment, on one's non-vision of it². So in view of the common non-vision of it one's aspiration for having a vision thereof cannot in any way be said to be inconsistent with the ubiquitous nature of Brahma.

X Is Shankara's Brahmapada Unethical?

Although in view of the great stress that Shankara has explicitly laid on the strict performance of both the samanya and Varnashrama dharmas (general and particular duties) it is unthinkable that one would subject his Brahmapada to the charge of being unethical, yet there is no evidence lacking of such a charge against it. As an instance of it Prof. Radhakrishnan has referred to Prof. Hogg's article on 'Advaita and Ethics' published in 1916 in the Madras Christian College Magazine. One of Prof. Hogg's charges against Brahmapada is that "On the view of the metaphysical identity of the individual and the Absolute.....there is no

1 Ibid. (Thibaut's Trans.).

2 SB. Tait. Up. II. 1 (दर्शनादर्शनापेक्षाद्ब्रह्मण जाप्यनाप्योः)

warrant for ethics" in it, for, "If Brahman is all, there is no need of any moral endeavour"¹. Secondly, "If all that exists is Brahman, and if the world of plurality is a shadow, there cannot be any real distinction between good and evil. If the world is a shadow, sin is less than a shadow. Why should not a man play with sin and enjoy a crime, since they are only shadows"². And then, according to Prof. Hume the possession of metaphysical knowledge about Brahma ".....even permits the knower unblushingly to continue in 'what seems to be much evil', with perfect impunity, although such acts are heinous crimes, and are disastrous in their effects for others who lack that kind of knowledge"³. The second fault that Hume finds with Brahnavada is that of the possibility and likelihood of its being "misunderstood and misapplied in practice"⁴. And as an illustration of it Hume has referred to the case of Virochana, the head of the Asuras, who misunderstood Prajapati's words about Self, and thereupon turned to be a follower of gross egoistic hedonism⁵.

Now, let us consider these charges and see if there is any justification for them. To begin with Hogg's indictment of Brahnavada, we may at once say that it involves a gross confusion between the ultimate and empirical points of view of Shankara. From the former point of view the individual is, no doubt, identical with Brahma; but this identity is certainly not a fact of his actual experience. Though really infinite, and so always seeking this infinity consciously or unconsciously, every individual actually thinks himself to be a finite being. And this fact of his actually felt finitude has been so well recognized by Shankara that it has been given the importance of being mentioned in the very beginning of his introduction to his celebrated commentary on the Brahma-sutras. Shankara has no-where maintained that the empirical or finite self as such is the same as the infinite Brahma. On the other hand, he has categorically denied the identity of the finite self or soul as such with Brahma, the Absolute⁶. So long as a person feels that he is finite all the evils associated with finitude are bound to be his miserable lot. A person may actually possess an invaluable treasure buried under ground, but if he somehow forgets that he has it, its actuality is of no good to him. It will be really his, only if he clearly knows it. An emperor may experience in

1 IP. Vol. II. p. 621.

2 Ibid.

3 An Outline of the Phil. of the Upanishads, p. 61.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 SBS. II. 1. 22 (जीवादधिकं ब्रह्म).

a dream that he has been dethroned and that he is now an extremely miserable man, and for him, so long as his dream lasts, all his actual wealth is as good as non-existent. If he is to enjoy his actual possessions, he must wake up. So also an individual person may in point of fact be identical with Brahma, but so long as he does not have an immediate and doubtless experience of that truth, his miseries cannot come to an end. And it is here that moral or ethical life comes in. For, the knowledge of a person's identity with Brahma, Shankara says, cannot dawn upon his mind until and unless he duly qualifies himself for it by leading a perfectly disciplined moral life. So, "the metaphysical truth of the oneness of Brahma", as says Prof. Radhakrishnan, "does not in any way prejudice the validity of the ethical distinctions on the empirical level"¹. From the empirical point of view vice and virtue, sin and saintliness, are as real as anything else. So long as a person sees duality his obligations are perfectly binding on him. In Prof. Max Muller's words, "the Vedanta philosophy leaves to every man a wide sphere of real usefulness and places him under a law as strict and binding as anything can be in this transitory life"².

It is true, no doubt, that for Shankara, as for the Upanishadic sages, the world is not real. But it does not mean that he regards it as a mere non-entity, or as a purely subjective experience of an individual person. According to him, as we have already seen, the phenomenal world is neither perfectly non-existent like the son of a barren woman nor even a purely subjective experience like an ordinary illusion or dream, but something quite different from all these. And in this phenomenal world both evil and good are as tangible facts as others. Shankara has never doubted the positive and negative values of man's moral efforts and sins respectively. From the empirical point of view both virtues and vices are quite real for him. A person who does not altogether discard evil actions and thoughts is, according to him, incapable of obtaining (realizing) Brahma³. The approach to Brahma is possible only through moral penance⁴. The path leading to Brahma is paved with truth (alone)⁵. Though Brahma alone is the ultimate origin, ground, and support of all things⁶, the distinction between good and evil has got to be made exactly as we distinguish between the good and bad things consisting of earth⁷.

1 IP. Vol. II. p. 621.

2 TLVP. p. 161.

3 Vide Kena Up. II. 23, and SB. on it.

4 SB. Prashna Up. I. 2.

5 Mund. Up. III. 1. 5-6; Prashna Up. I. 16; Shvet. Up. I. 16; and SB. on them.

6 SB. Chh. Up. VI. 8. 4.

7 SBS. II. 3. 48.

"Light is one only, and yet we shun a fire which has consumed dead bodies, not any other fire. The sun is one only; yet we shun only that part of his light which shines on unholy places, not that part which falls on pure ground"¹. Thus, we see that the ethical criticism of Brahmanavada based either on the idea of the Oneness of Brahma or on that of the unreality of the world is really based on a gross misunderstanding of it.

Then, if Brahmanavada is misunderstood it is none of its faults. All truths cannot be rightly understood by all. The understanding of a truth depends upon the necessary conditions and qualifications required for it. Nothing to say of the highest truth of realizing one's identity with Brahma, which requires not only a penetrating insight but also perfectly purified heart and mind, even mathematical and scientific truths cannot be grasped by all persons alike. And when a truth is not correctly and fully grasped there is, no doubt, a possibility of its wrong application too. Little knowledge, as the proverb runs, is always dangerous.

In this connection it may, however, be pointed out that while it is only the pseudo or superficial knowledge of Brahma that may be misapplied, the case with scientific knowledge is altogether different. For, the worst misapplication of scientific knowledge takes place only when it is correct to the core. All of us, who are living in the present so-called scientifically most advanced age, know well as to how and to what extent the misapplication of scientific knowledge can go towards the execution of immoral acts, not only in the hands of erratic individuals but also in the hands of so-called great nations themselves. But it is certainly not so in the case of the knowledge of Brahma. The knowledge of Brahma may be misapplied only when it is not true knowledge; whereas scientific knowledge can be employed to achieve unworthy and abominable ends even when, or probably only when, it is correct. But, really speaking, it is no fault of knowledge itself. Knowledge as such is unquestionably a great intrinsic value. It is only when it falls into unworthy hands that it gets polluted. But, happily, true knowledge of Brahma, unlike scientific knowledge, can never fall into unworthy hands. The knowledge that Virochana put to wrong use was certainly not the true knowledge of Brahma. So far as the true knowledge of Brahma is concerned there is no possibility or danger of its misapplication. How can a person who comes to identify his self with the Self of all ever think of injuring the interests of others? 'He who sees all things in his Self and his Self in all

1 SBS. II. 3. 48 (Thibaut's Trans.).

things cherishes no ill-will for them'¹. Prof. Max Muller has rightly said that the 'minds so engrossed with divine things as the Vedanta philosophers, are not likely to fall victims to the ordinary temptations of the world, the flesh and other powers''².

A true knower of Brahma is incapable of indulging in undesirable and forbidden acts. 'The absence of obligations for him does not mean that he is permitted to act as it pleases him to do. As a matter of fact, it is the false sense of egoity which impells a person to perform evil deeds. And this egoity being absent in the case of the man of perfect knowledge, the question of his acting as it pleases him to act does not, in fact, arise'³. As it has been rightly maintained by Sureshvaracharya 'yatheshtacharana' (acting as it pleases one to act) results from ignorance, which in turn is the effect of evil doings, vice or demerit. How can then that which is the effect of demerit be present in the effect of merit (merit and demerit being contradictory things) ?⁴ Nothing to say of perfect knowledge which burns the seeds of all desires, freedom of action is not possible even at the stage of aspiration for it⁵. One does not proceed to get that thing in which one is un-interested. How can then an aspirant, who is uninterested in the material prosperity of all the three worlds, get inclined to have any particular object there-in ?⁶ When even a very hungry person does not like to eat poison, it is but quite natural that a sane person whose desire to enjoy even sweet dishes has been completely eradicated will not knowingly like to eat it⁷.

The person who acquires the true knowledge of Brahma does not become blind to the phenomenal world. He sees it, but there is a change in his attitude towards it. Its twinkling glamour and passing pleasures no longer delude and allure him. For, he is now in full possession of the treasure of that perfect joy which never gets abated. He is exactly like that man who has seen through the mystery of a mirage and therefore does not think of quenching his thirst in it although it may continue to appear to him as before. He covets no position or power. No treasure, however vast, valuable or beautiful it may be, can move him to act immorally, for he has no motive for doing so. But morally he must act,

1 Isha Up., 6.

2 TLVP., p. 170.

3 SBS. II. 3. 48 (न च नियोगाभावात्..... सम्यग्दर्शिनः)

4 Naishkarmya-Siddhi, IV. 63 (धर्मज्जायते..... अधर्मकार्ये कथं तत्स्यात्)

5 Ibid. IV. 64 (तिष्ठतु.....यथेष्टाचरणम्)

6 Ibid. IV. 65.

7 Ibid. IV. 66.

for so to do has become his habit, and habit is next to nature, nay, in the words of the Duke of Wellington, 'ten times nature'¹. The knower of Brahma may continue to walk and talk like a layman, but he will think with the Upanishadic sages. His attitude towards persons and things may be said to be more or less like that of a physicist who, inspite of his firm conviction that the ordinary notions of people about the world and its objects are erroneous, keeps on to deal with them in the self-same manner in which he used to do prior to his acquisition of the scientific knowledge. His social or moral behaviour is not adversely affected by his new knowledge.

Thus, at no stage of his life the knower of Brahma can be guilty of the subversion of moral laws. He obeys them both when he is a seeker of knowledge and when he has acquired it. As a seeker of knowledge he has got to obey them, for without doing so, he knows, he cannot succeed in his mission. And when his goal has been reached he abides by them, for, in the first place, he has then no motive to transgress them, and secondly because his good habits by that time get so well formed that he cannot but act in keeping with them. He will not indulge in forbidden acts, for, forbidden acts had already been given up by him before the knowledge of his identity with Brahma dawned upon his mind. One may fall into a well or thorns in the darkness of night, but when the sun has risen in its full glory there is no cause for one's falling into it². Moreover, his Self-realization or direct experience of his essential identity with the Self of all makes him regard not only his neighbours but also distant human beings as his very Self. How can he then ever think in terms of injuring their interest or of doing anything immoral? One with whom the "feeling of a common interest, nay, of the oneness or solidarity of the human race" is, as Prof. Max Muller says, "most natural"³, is incapable of encroaching upon the rights of others. To act-immorally is out of question for him.

It is true that Shankara, like Shrimadbhagavadgita and the Upanishads, speaks of the unobligatoriness of 'karmas' for the possessor of perfect knowledge⁴, and also of his freedom from sin⁵, but that is not tantamount to granting him a licence to do whatever he likes. It simply

1 Quoted by W. James in his Psychology (Briefer Course), p. 142.

2 SB. Chh. Up. II. 23. 1.

3 TLVP. p. 168.

4 BG. III. 17. and SB. on it.

5 BG. XVIII. 17, V. 10; Br. Up. IV. 4. 23; Chh. Up. IV. 14. 3; and SB. on them.

means that, having realized the highest ideal of his life, there is now nothing in this world or outside it that would present itself to his mind as an end yet to be realized, and that whatever he now does he does with perfect unattachment to it. But he shall not act immorally at all, for such desires as make a man act immorally he has none. He seeks no power, no position, no possession or progeny, as a matter of fact, no personal end whatsoever¹. For the sake of what, then, will he trouble himself?² This, however, does not mean that he will not act at all. Without acting no person can ever live³. So, if the knower of Brahma lives at all he must act. But his acts will always and automatically be for common good⁴. He will always act morally for so to do has become a part and parcel of his nature. Whether he desires it or not, he cannot help acting according to his nature⁵. So, he will act morally even without feeling any obligation or necessity for it⁶. For the world as a whole Herbert Spencer's concept of Absolute Ethics may ever remain an Utopia; but for the knower of Brahma it is an already accomplished fact. For us the mere knowledge of the distinction between the right and wrong may not be enough to act rightly; but in the case of a Brahman (knower of Brahma) the Socratic saying that 'virtue is knowledge' seems to be quite true. He is moral throughout his life. He is moral as an aspirant; he is moral as an adept. Morality, in fact, is the very soul of Brahman. In it, in the words of Prof. Max Muller, 'we find ethics in the beginning, ethics in the middle and ethics in the end'⁷.

XI The Comprehensiveness of Shankara's Ethics :

The greatest merit of Shankara's ethical view consists in its comprehensiveness. Although, strictly speaking, it cannot be designated as any of the modern ethical theories called Rationalism, Hedonism, Perfectionism and Value-theory; yet, if taken in its entirety it may be definitely viewed as containing some or the other characteristic feature or features of all of them. Let us briefly see how.

To begin with rationalism it may be confidently said that according to its most out-spoken advocate, viz, Kant, the true morality of a person

1 Br. Up. IV. 4. 22.

2 Br. Up. IV. 4. 12 (किमिच्छन् कस्य कामाय शरीरमनुसंज्वरेत्)

3 BG. III. 5.

BG. III. 20 (लोकसंग्रहार्थम्)

5 BG, III, 33 and SB. on it, 6 BG. III. 22 and SB. on it. 7 TLVP., p. 170.

or act lies in the right direction of one's will, and not in its outward achievements. Good will, with Kant, is 'the only jewel that shines by its own light', and so is 'duty for duty's sake' his only moral cry. And Shankara also, we may say, is a strong advocate of 'duty for duty's sake' principle of morality. As we have already seen, he is a perfect believer in the Gita view called 'anasaktiyoga', which simply means disinterested performance of one's duties. We are, according to it, not to look to the fruits of our actions, but simply to perform them if it is our duty so to do¹. No doubt, Kant's ethical formula of 'duty for duty's sake' has been criticized mainly on the ground of its being an abstract and contentless formula², but that is a different thing, and has nothing to do with the fact of its common advocacy by Kant and Shankara both. So far as the value of disinterested actions is concerned, it cannot be denied that both Shankara and Kant duly recognized it, in so far as they equally believed in the ultimate good of such actions accruing to the persons concerned³. To both of them the world seems to be so constituted that good and bad actions must sooner or later be followed by their appropriate rewards and punishments respectively, no matter whether they are consciously aimed at, or not. And God according to both of them is the agency which makes this adjustment between one's actions and their retribution possible, if not in this life, in the life or existence to follow the dissolution of one's present gross body. Apart from this, freedom and immortality of the soul may also be said to be their commonly recognized postulates of morality. No doubt, unlike Shankara, Kant failed to postulate the beginninglessness of soul which can be said to be as essential a postulate of morality as Kant believed the soul's immortality to be, but it only shows his inconsistency, and does not wipe out the striking affinity of his view with that of Shankara.

Moreover, Kant's maxim of morality, viz., 'so act as to treat humanity whether in thine own person or in that of any other, always as an end, and never as a means' may also be said to have been duly recognized by Shankara. Of course, unlike Kant, he did not lay down any such exactly-worded maxim of morality, but its recognition is undoubtedly implied by what he has maintained about one's duties towards one's own self and towards others. To hold Self-realization as the highest ideal of one's life, as Shaunkara has done, is certainly to treat humanity in one's

1 BG. and SBG. II. 47, 49; III. 9, 19; IV. 20; V. 11, 12.

2 See 'A Manual of Ethics', p. 154.

3 SBG. VI. 40.

own person as an end; and to view other persons' happiness and unhappiness, as Shankara has asked us to do, as our own happiness and unhappiness¹ is undoubtedly to treat humanity in them as an end. So far as the true realization or perfection of a person's self is concerned, it does not, strictly speaking, lie in another person's hand. It has got to be achieved through one's own earnest endeavours. It can neither be purchased for any price nor can it be given as a gift by any benevolent person. If the urge or effort to perfect oneself does not arise from within one's own self, no amount of effort on another person's part can be of any avail. Self-perfection is literally self-perfection. It is perfection of one's self by one's own self. What lies in other persons' hands is only to create such conditions and circumstances as may conduce to our happiness or well-being. Shankara, therefore, is perfectly right in speaking of self-realization as an end for one's own self and in dwelling upon the desirability of treating other persons' happiness and unhappiness as one's own. And that is exactly the purport of Kant's another maxim of morality, which runs as : 'Try always to perfect thyself, and try to conduce to the happiness of others, by bringing about favourable circumstances, as you cannot make others perfect.' Thus, we can say that Shankara's view of morality has much in common with Kant's rationalistic view of it. But this should not mislead us to think that Kant's Self-realization is the same as Shankara's Self-realization. Kant really had no idea of Shankara's Self, the Existence-Knowledge and Bliss-Absolute itself. Moreover, Kant was too stringent. There is no place for feelings, howsoever excellent they may be, in his ethics. But the same cannot be said to be true about Shankara's view of morality. To quote Prof. Maitra, "in Shankara the negative attitude to empirical life is scarcely as pronounced as in Kant."²

Now, coming to Hedonism, which regards pleasure as the highest goal of human life, it may undoubtedly be said that as such it is poles-asunder from the ethics of Shankara, according to whom the seeking of worldly pleasures is definitely an obstruction not only in the way of the realization of our highest ideal, viz., Brahma or Moksha, but also to the right and efficient performance of our duties, both sadharana and vishe-sha. In the words of Swami Vivekanand, "It is a mistake to suppose that pleasure is the goal; the cause of all the miseries we have in the world is that men foolishly think pleasure to be the ideal to strive for."³

1 SBG. IV. 32 (आत्मोपम्येन.....सः परमोत्कृष्टः)

2 The Ethics of the Hindus, p. 316.

3 Karma—Yoga, p. 1.

Shankara, as we have seen, is an advocate of 'duty for duty's sake' which is something quite contrary to the principle of the Hedonists who judge the value of human actions not by one's attitude with which they are performed, but by the amount of pleasure which results from them. But despite all the difference that may be rightly pointed out to be there between them, Shankara's moral philosophy may, in a way, also be said to be hedonistic in nature. In the first place, Brahma the attainment or realization of which is, according to Shankara, the highest ideal of human life, is not only of the nature of pure consciousness but of pure bliss also. No doubt, this bliss, pure and ever-enduring as it is, is altogether different from our passing and impure pleasures derived from the attainment of the finite objects of our desires; nevertheless it may be viewed as a super-excellent supra-sensuous and supra-intellectual permanent pleasure itself. And if so viewed it may be said to be a pleasure both qualitatively and quantitatively different from all our finite pleasures; and qualitative and quantitative differences between pleasures have undoubtedly been recognized by some hedonists themselves. So, if the bliss of Brahma is taken in this sense, hedonists' view that pleasure is the highest goal of our life can easily be incorporated in the ethical view of Shankara the attainment of whose Brahma or moksha is the same as the cessation of all pains and miseries and the attainment of the highest and purest happiness conceivable. In fact, the same word 'ananda' or 'sukha' has been employed for both the worldly pleasures and the bliss of Brahma, both by Shankara¹ and his followers alike. The former they call satishayasukha and the latter, niratishaya-sukha, meaning thereby finite or excelled and infinite or unexcelled happiness respectively.² Thus, the difference between the ethical ideals of Shankara and the hedonists will come only to this that while the former holds the niratishaya-sukha to be the highest end of human life the latter think in terms of the satishaya-sukha only. In other words, if we want to view Shankara's moral theory in terms of hedonism we may call it Transcendental Hedonism so as to distinguish it from the ordinary hedonism which may be then called empirical hedonism.

Moreover, there is another feature of Shankara's ethics in respect of which it may also be likened to what is designated as Psychological hedonism, according to which we always aim at pleasure and pleasure alone. No doubt, Psychological hedonism of both Bentham and Mill has

1 SB. Tait. Up. II. 7.

2 Vedanta-paribhasa, 8 (सुखं च द्विविधं.....)

been subjected to vehement criticism both in the West and the East, and really speaking, apart from its other defects, it is inconsistent with ethical hedonism which holds pleasure to be the highest ideal of human life. All the same there seems to be an element of truth in it which could not but be recognized by Rashdall when he said that 'Pleasure is an element in everything to which we attach value',¹ and by Mackenzie when he admitted that "It is probably true that everything at which we aim is thought of as pleasant."² It may not always be pleasure as a subjective state of mind which may be said to be consciously sought, for more often than not it is certainly some or the other thing different from such a subjective state which constitutes the object of our desire; but it cannot be denied that whatever we seek we seek as something pleasant and not as a source of sorrow or unpleasantness. And so Shankara would say that it is always the bliss of Brahma, our lost paradise, which we seek to regain, consciously or unconsciously, rightly or wrongly, through all our activities and attainments. Whether it is a prized object or a pleasant state of mind, which we aim at, we aim at it as something pleasant; and when we succeed in attaining this object of our desire, whatever it be, we experience pleasure or joy which is nothing but a limited or clouded manifestation of the bliss of Brahma itself.³

Ethical hedonism is, no doubt, incompatible with psychological hedonism; for, if pleasure is the only thing that we always aim at, there is no sense in saying that we ought to seek it. But this charge does not really apply to Shankara's unique hedonism. For, it does not hold that in seeking worldly pleasures, or in desiring this or that object calculated to give us pleasure, we seek the bliss of Brahma directly, consciously and correctly. On the other hand, it views such cases of seeking pleasure as being definitely detrimental to the genuine interest of the person concerned. To seek the bliss of Brahma in and through worldly pleasures is, according to it, to miss it. It is no use to grope in the dark or to move in blind alleys. The trial-and-error method of learning is utterly futile here. The bliss of Brahma can be realized only when it is consciously and carefully sought as and where it ought to be sought. So the assertion that in seeking pleasures or in appropriating worldly objects we are, in the heart of our hearts, seeking our own hidden bliss itself, does not at all

1 The Theory of Good and Evil, Vol. II. p. 38.

2 A Manual of Ethics, p. 69.

3 SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 32; SB. Tait. Up. II. 7; Vedanta-paribhasa 8.

come into conflict with the assertion that we should aim at the realization of our true Self or Brahma. A person who wastes his energy in catching the shadow of a thing may very well be advised to catch the thing itself.

Just as Shankara's moral philosophy, though vitally different from hedonism, has some affinity with it, so also there is some resemblance as well as difference between it and the ethical theory which goes by the name of Perfectionism or Eudaemonism. Their difference or resemblance, however, cannot be discussed here with any adequacy. All that we can do is to have a bird's-eye-view of their most salient features only.

The first thing that should strike a student of Shankara's Brahman-vada when he happens to go through the writings of some of the most leading exponents of Eudaemonism is their advocacy of Self-realization as being the highest ethical ideal of human life. According to them, as according to Shankara, the self to be realized is our true self. In the opinion of Green, ".....the essential element in the nature of man is the rational or spiritual principle within him¹..... And the significance of the moral life consists in the constant endeavour to make this principle more and more explicit—to bring out more and more completely our rational, self-conscious, spiritual nature"². 'Self-realization through self-sacrifice' may be said to be a watch-word of the Eudaemonists. And in Mr. Bradley's words "It implies the identification of the will with an object, which entails in the effort to realize it the probable or certain negation of our private existence", i. e., 'the existence which is ours', 'distinct from others, what is centred in us as 'this' or 'that' person'. 'Self-sacrifice is knowingly to give up, in part or altogether, this existence to that which is higher.....It is self-realization, the identification of our will with the ideal.'³ Thus, according to him 'Realize yourself' means 'Realize yourself as the self-conscious member of an infinite whole by realizing that whole in your self.'⁴ Similarly Hegel's enlightening interpretation of the maxim 'Die to live' (by which the medieval christians meant that "flesh should be crucified in order that spirit may be saved")⁵, so as to mean that "the self must die as a narrow, private individual, and live the richer and wider life of the spiritual universe beyond him"⁶,

1 Mackenzie : A Manual of Ethics, p. 254.

2 Ibid. p. 255.

3 Ethical Studies, p. 309.

4 Ibid. p. 80.

5 Dr. Sinha : Ethics (1941), p. p. 181-32.

6 Ibid.

also emphasizes the ethical importance and need of self-realization through self-sacrifice. And all this may very well be incorporated in Shankara's moral philosophy. For, Shankara also, as we have seen, has advocated the realization of one's true self as the highest ideal of one's life and has also fully recognized the ethical worth of sacrificing one's narrow interests by bringing them into harmony with the interests of all. His aspirant as well as his knower of Brahma sees all beings as equal and hates or injures no-body¹. In fact, this sort of self-sacrifice with a view to realize one's higher self is a common feature of almost all schools of Indian philosophy, no matter whether they believe in devotion (bhakti) or in knowledge (jnana) as a means of attaining the summum bonum of human life.² The view that the rise or prosperity of good men is for the benefit or well-being of others (परोपकाराय सतां विभूतयः) is commonly acceptable to all, and Shankara, especially, may rightly be said to be believing in the view that one should sacrifice the interest of an individual (whether it be one's own self or somebody else) for the sake of a family or group, that of a group for the sake of a village (or town), and that of a village for the sake of one's country, and ultimately even the interest of one's country, nay of the whole earth, in the interest of one's true Self, that is, for the sake of the Self which is the common Self of all living beings, residing not only on this earth, but in the whole world (त्यजेदेकं कुलस्यार्थं ग्रामस्यार्थं कुलं त्यजेत्, ग्रामं जनपदस्यार्थं आत्मार्थं पृथिवीं त्यजेत्). This is certainly the realization of a higher and higher self by sacrificing at each stage a comparatively narrower self, and is thus very much like Green's notion of realizing the universal 'Spiritual Principle in Nature'. But this should not make us close our eyes to the vital difference that exists between the highest Self of Shankara and that of the Western Eudaemonists, Hegel, Green and Bradley, all. To it we shall return in Chapter X and XI. Here it should suffice to say that while Shankara's highest Self is devoid of all duality and distinctions the highest Self of these Eudaemonists is at best a system, a social organization as it were, of a number of self-conscious partners or units existing as members one of

1 SBG. VI. 32 (अनुकूलप्रतिकूले तुल्यतया सर्वभूतेषु समं पश्यति न कस्यचित् प्रतिकूलमाचरति)

SB. Isha Up. 6 (घृणां न करोति)

2 Compare Tulasidasa : doha 3 of Kishkindha kanda, and 7 (१) of Balakanda of Ramacharitamansa; also Bhagavata Purana, XI. 2. 41, 45, 46; XI. 5. 15; XI. 11. 29-31.

another and of the organized whole. Shankara's therefore is, in the words of Prof. Maitra, ".....a new type of Edeemonism, a kind of Transcendental Edeemonism.....Similarly the conception of Self-attainment or Atma-labha is a unique and original form of the conception of Self-realization which is to be distinguished from the Hegelian and Kantian conceptions of it....."¹.

To take up the relation of Shankara's moral philosophy to the modern Value-theory of ethics it may be stated that both have duly recognized the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic values and have viewed the former as being decidedly much superior to the latter. Truth, beauty and the good are the most commonly recognized intrinsic values, although some would plead the case of love, freedom, life, and probably of other things also, to be regarded as intrinsic values. Any way, intrinsic values are said to be those which are valuable in themselves in an unqualified sense, while those things which possess only extrinsic value are valued not in themselves but on account of something else, in the acquisition of which they are instrumental. In other words, they are instrumental values. In the words of Mr. Wright, "An intrinsic value is of worth on its own account; an instrumental value because of its consequence"². Happiness, for example, is viewed as an intrinsic value, for, on reflection, we find it to be something good or valuable in itself; but the same thing cannot be said of our food-articles and clothes; for we do not value them on their own account, but on account of the purpose they serve—the former because they satisfy our hunger and the latter because they protect us from cold and heat, and also probably because they give us a good look.

Shankara, of course, cannot be said to have propounded a doctrine of values like modern writers on them. But his distinction between 'abhyudaya' and 'nihshreyasa', of which we have already spoken, can very well be placed on the same par with the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic values. All the worldly objects that we aim at and value come under what he has called 'abhyudaya'. They can rightly be said to possess only extrinsic value; for, on reflection, none of them can really be said to be an end or value in itself. The only thing that can be made 'the direct object of a rational choice' is, according to him, Brahma

1 The Ethics of the Hindus, p. 315.

2 General Introduction to Ethics, p. 338.

which is perfect knowledge, perfect bliss, and perfect being, all par excellence as one. His Brahma may, thus, be said to be a perfect homogeneity of all the three most commonly recognized intrinsic values, truth, good, and beauty (satyam shivam sundaram). It is therefore called 'nihshreyasa' or unexcelled good as distinguished from 'abhyudaya' or worldly rise (including even the attainment of heaven) which can at best be viewed as a relative good only.

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The Problem of Evil

‘कष्टा खलु सुरनरतिर्यक्प्रेतादिषु संसारदुःखबहुलेषु प्राणिनिकायेषु
जन्मजरामरणरोगादिसम्प्राप्तिरज्ञानात्’—शंकर (कठ. उप. भा. २.५)
‘जीवस्यापि तु दुःखप्राप्तिरविद्यानिमित्तैव’ (ब्र. सू. भा. २. ३. ४६)

Chapter 8

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The Problem of evil is, indeed, an intricate problem. It is one of those old problems that have ever vexed inquisitive minds, both in the east and west, from the very infancy of man's thought.

I Evil, an actual fact

An optimist par excellence may see no evil in this world, and for him, if there be any so thorough, there will arise no problem with regard to it. But to the average man evil seems to be as real a fact as any other fact of his every-day experience. In fact, when evil comes to us in the form of a loss of our personal prestige or possessions, or in that of harm or injury done to our own kith and kin, it obviously appears to be a more concrete and hard fact of our life than any other that we come across. That there are a number of things which are commonly recognized as evils in the world is, undoubtedly, a fact that cannot be questioned without meeting a ready and strong contradiction from all sides. Can we say that injustice and insult, disease and death, failure and frustration, poverty and pain, degradation and downfall, murder and mutilation, epidemics and earthquakes, blunder and blemish, slavery and humiliation, dishonour and deprivation, violence and villainy, starvation and strangulation, are not, as such, evils? The so-called optimist may, no doubt, differ from those whom he dubs as pessimists with regard to their number, degree and significance, and may view the world and our life in it from an angle of vision which is different from that of others; but he cannot deny the presence of evil altogether and be true to the nature of the world as it really is. This, however, does not mean that the world is through and through made of evil. If it is not a bed of roses, it is also not one of thorns only. Truly speaking, both roses and thorns seem to characterize its nature. As it has been very correctly observed by Tulasidasa, the eminent author of the well-known *Ramacharitamansa*, it contains good and evil, or merit and demerit.

both.¹ Good and evil are, in fact, relative terms and either will lose its significance without bringing in its correlate. If there be a world beyond evil, it will also be, beyond good. But so far as this world of ours is concerned it is beyond neither.

No doubt, some visionaries of optimistic bent of mind may dream of so transforming the world, of course in an unimaginably remote time, as to free it from all evils. But is their dream at all warranted by facts? Is there any indication that the world is really moving in that direction? We may feel proud of our scientific investigations and inventions, and we may congratulate ourselves on our establishing inter-national leagues and organizations and on having conquered nature in a considerable measure. But can we honestly and confidently say that we have really succeeded in eliminating animal or human suffering, or in driving out moral evil from the world to any appreciable extent? And, even if it be admitted, for argument's sake, that we have to some extent, succeeded in eliminating evil and that our world has already changed its direction for the better, what assurance is there that we and our world will keep on moving along the same line? Who can say that a third or fourth or fifth world-war will not change the direction of the pendulum? Moreover, can we ever expect to control evil phenomena like earthquakes? Can we ever think of saving the world from its heat-death to which, if what the scientists say is right, it is doomed? Can we ever think in terms of extirpating the pangs of birth and death? We may not be able to recall it, that is a different thing, but it seems to be beyond doubt that the phenomenon of our birth must have really been an experience of immense agony. One may not come back to tell us as to how painful it is to enter into the jaws of death; but from the fact of there being an instinctive fear of it,² as it were, not only in men but in other animals also, and from our observation of the men in death-beds, we cannot resist believing that death or dying must in point of fact be a very unpleasant experience. And what animal is there in the world which is free from at least these two great evils of it? Even if it be taken for granted, although without any indication of or ground for it, that all other evils will some day be ousted from our world, these two monster evils at least must always remain there. What comes to be must cease to be; and if the world as such is to go on, the processes of coming and ceasing to be must also go on repeating themselves. The problem of evil, therefore, is a real problem, and it will continue to stand as such so long as the world remains what

1 Ramayana, Balakanda, 6.

2 C/O Yoga-Sutra II, 9.

it is. One may, of course, close one's eyes to the fact of evil, but that would neither explain it nor help one out of it.

II The untenability of extreme pessimism and optimism both

If there are such moments in our life as challenge the unqualified faith of an extreme optimist, there are surely such situations also as do not fail to shake the faith of a thoroughgoing pessimist too. Both the optimist and the pessimist are, indeed, unfaithful to their actual experiences of life. As a theory of life pessimism seems to be as unsatisfactory as optimism. In the words of Dr. Tsanoff, ".....an utterly worthless world would not admit of being condemned, and the world is not devoid of real value, at any rate not so long as it includes upright and forthright condemners of itself. Were all the facts of life as dark as the pessimistic survey portrays them, and were all men bovine in their dull response, the world might perhaps deserve the pessimist's stern verdict. But the stern verdict itself, manifesting as it does a sense and a standard of worth higher than bovine dullness, is a fact which compels reconsideration of the case. Even if no other reason were available, pessimistic philosophy itself, in so far as it is a reasoned protest and more than a mere moan and troubled weather, would alone refute the extreme pessimistic condemnation of life. Reasoned dissatisfaction with life does reveal one variety of heroic reaction which, in resisting evil, reaffirms positive worth and the tragic dignity of life."¹

Similarly, the very assertions and attitudes of the advocates of the 'everything good and pleasant' philosophy of life seem to negate it. And this becomes quite evident if we closely examine the statements of those individuals who deny the existence of evil things in the world so enthusiastically and passionately as they make William James pronounce their optimism rather 'quasi-pathological.'² Take, for example, the words of Marie Bashkirtseff: "Can you believe it? I find everything good and pleasant, even my tears, my grief. I enjoy weeping, I enjoy my despair, I enjoy being exasperated and sad."³ Now, does not the word 'even' here indicate that tears, grief, etc., which it is intended to qualify or distinguish from their opposites or contraries, such as smiles or joys, and the like, are, in the heart of hearts of the lady concerned, judged by

1 The Nature of Evil, pp. 364-65.

2 Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 83.

3 Quoted by W. James (in his Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 83.)

her to be something apparently evil ? It is one thing to take grief lightly, but, quite another to be able to efface its distinction from joy. A person who does not really distinguish between grief and joy, pain and pleasure, will not and cannot speak of 'my grief' 'my tears' on the one hand, and of their being enjoyed on the other. If grief and the like were not felt as distinct and separate from their opposites, the assertion that even they are enjoyed by me would lose all its significance. If her grief were really joy, or just like it, to her, the lady, to be true to her experience, should have said "I enjoy my joy", and not "I enjoy my weeping or despair." The moment the optimist makes such distinctions the presence of the opposites of good and pleasant is recognized by her or him. As says Dr. Tsanoff the very "question, 'can you believe it.....' suggests defiance beneath the enthusiasm, or at any rate discloses, running through the docile acquiescence and indeed sustaining it, one worry, one evil : the evil of worrying over evil... If evil is really an unreality, an illusion, why should one be so thrilled over one's unresponsiveness to it ?"¹

If everything in the world were really good and pleasant, how would the optimist account for the views of the pessimist and the common men who do not see quite eye to eye with him ? To say that theirs is an erroneous view of life is to recognize the presence of at least one evil in the world viz , error; while not to pronounce their views as erroneous would mean to admit a number of evil things recognized by them. But in either case the optimist will not be perfectly faithful to his creed. Moreover, if everything were good and well with the world already, will not an uncompromising optimist, then, be required to give up all moral efforts, the essence of which lies in distinguishing between the good and the evil, the ideal and the actual, and in chasing the former by leaving the latter aside. Any desire, any effort, for the betterment of the world we live in implies some sort of dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs in it, and thus annuls downright the claims of a self-consistent optimism. To be really self-consistent an enthusiastic optimist, like lady Bashkirtself, will be necessarily driven to lead a life of perfectly passive enjoyment, to sacrifice all his or her ideals, and to give up all efforts for the attainment of the beautiful as distinguished from the ugly, the right as distinguished from the wrong, and the pleasant as distinguished from the unpleasant. All errors and illusions would themselves be illusory for him, and for fear of contradicting himself he would not venture to waste his time in sifting the right from the wrong, the pure from the impure, and the

¹ The Nature of Evil, (p. p. 3-4)

neat and clean from the dirty. And what sort of man such an optimist would be is not for us to say.

In truth, to quote Swami Vivekananda, "This world is neither optimistic nor pessimistic; it is a mixture of both."¹ "This is a world of good and evil. Wherever there is good, evil follows."² The problem of evil, therefore, is as real a problem as any other philosophical problem pertaining to this world can be. Let us therefore proceed to see some of the representative thoughts about it.

III Some attempts to solve the problem of evil

(a) The Zoroastrian view of Evil—To begin with the Zoroastrian speculation about evil, we may note at the very outset that "the first principle in the Zoroastrian philosophy of life is the principle of the essential duality of the cosmos."³ Their speculation about evil, therefore, naturally starts from the fact of the actually felt gulf between good and evil. Believing that they could not have a single principle or entity for their origin or source, the Zoroastrians posit two different and opposite cosmic principles, viz., Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman, to account for them. Ahura-Mazda or God is believed to be the cause and creator of all goodness, and to be related to evil in no way other than that of being in constant and unqualified opposition to it. Ahriman, on the other hand, is regarded as the original and ever-active pioneer of all evil. The world of good and evil, it is held, is the result of the activities of these two opposite agencies, the one creating, and the other always busy in undoing the work of its creation.

To the Zoroastrian mind the evil in the world is as real as the good in it; and so is the struggle between them. This struggle, according to the Zoroastrians, has been going on from the very beginning of the creation of the world, with unabated strength on either side. The Zoroastrian, however, recognizes the importance and value of man's moral striving, and believes in the ultimate and complete victory of Ahura-Mazda and his forces, under the able and strong leadership of Saoshyant, over the evil forces of Ahriman, with the result that evil will ultimately cease to exist, and there will, then, be everywhere an undisturbed reign of perfect virtue.⁴

No doubt, so far as the Zoroastrians' observation of the empirical world is concerned, it seems to be quite correct. As we have already

1 Swami Vivekananda: Complete Works, p. 180.

3 Tzanoff : The Nature of Evil, p. 27.

4 Vide "The Nature of Evil," p. p. 27-29.

2 Ibid. p. 181.

maintained, both evil and good seem to characterize our world; and it is true that a sort of struggle is going on between them not only in the objective world but in our minds also. And the need and importance of our moral striving, we admit, can never be over-emphasized. But, on the Zoroastrian view, it is really very difficult to understand the right significance of this moral striving. If Ahura-Mazda, on the one hand, and Ahriman on the other, are the real creators of good and evil respectively, where do men come in ? Either men should also be admitted to have a real hand in the creation and perpetration of good and evil both, or their moral efforts would be of no avail for the former, and of no significance against the latter. But if men can create good and evil both, why unnecessarily posit unseen forces to account for them ? Cannot they be regarded as facts of our own creation ? Moreover, if conscious cosmic principles are held responsible for the evil and good that exist in this world, what about man's responsibility for them ? Will not all morality go to dogs, if men's good and bad actions are really dissociated from them, and are assigned to the working of cosmic agencies in or outside them ? And does not an average man feel himself to be free to act rightly or wrongly ?

Besides, if Ahriman and his forces are as real as Ahura-Mazda, is it not only a pious wish that a day will dawn when he with his horrible hosts will be completely routed ? Can a real person or thing ever be vanquished or driven out of existence altogether ? What indication is there that the war that has been going on from the very beginning of the creation will ultimately be decided in favour of one party rather than the other ? Is it not hoping against all hopes that the good in this world will one day subdue its evil altogether ? If the presence of good and evil—two opposite things in the world justifies us in positing two opposite and equally real cosmic principles, are we not, on the same ground, justified in maintaining the existence of the same principles in the remotest possible future as well ? Who knows that Ahriman who has been able to carry on the war against his enemy, despite all his possible resources so long, may in future gain greater strength and devise better and more fatal means in the form of hitherto unknown bombs, gases, war tactics and the like, and may thus turn the events of war in his own favour ? As the two great world-wars have shown to us, initial victory or defeat does not necessarily mean final victory or defeat. Moreover, we do not correctly know which side has been really favoured by victory so far. In fact, the Zoroastrian explanation of evil has little force of reason behind it. At the very face of it,

it seems to be rather a naive effort of human mind to posit two unknown forces because there are two apparently different things to be accounted for. There would, indeed, be no end to the number of ultimate entities if we were to posit a separate entity corresponding to each and every separate fact of our experience. Why then suppose only two ?

(b) The Early Greek view of evil—According to the early Greeks “man’s thought and outreaching zeal seem to have been the roots of evil”¹. This may either mean that thinking and aspiring are in themselves something undesirable or that there are some beings, capable of originating evils (for man), who cannot bear that men should think and try for their betterment, and because men (contrary to the desire of these beings, call them gods or devils, who are by nature jealous of man’s progress) indulged in thinking and made endeavours to improve their lot, evils were sent to them by these their original perpetrators.

But this speculation about the evils of the world, whichever of the two interpretations be put on it, seems to be really very naive and crude. That thinking and making sincere and honest efforts for realizing our religious, moral and aesthetic ends be deemed as causes of our evils, or as evils in themselves, is something that apparently seems to be unsound. Such an idea, in fact, militates against the voice of our inner self. It appears to be obnoxious to our moral sense, and seems to do violence to our rational nature as well. It not only confuses between what we now regard as positive and negative values; but, to reach the summit of absurdity, also makes the former the origin of the latter. To hold that negative values or evils originate from their opposites or positive values is by no means better logic than to regard light as the cause of darkness. No doubt, evil thoughts and vicious desires or ambitions of men may rightly be viewed as the causes of their further evils; but, then, the question as to ‘why there are evil thoughts and evil desires in man from the very beginning’ would necessarily crop up and demand an explanation of it. Moreover, the Greeks do not refer the evils of man to evil thoughts and desires but to thoughts and aspirations as such. But if thinking and aspiring as such be evils, it would follow that it is better to be on a lower scale of being than that of man; but that would mean a flat contradiction of Mill’s estimate of the worth of beings when he says that “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied better to be socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied”². To take the second interpretation that

1 The Nature of Evil, p. 11.

2 Utilitarianism, p. 14.

evils were (and are) sent to men by beings in some sense superior to them, we may briefly say that such a view is more or less on the same par with the Zoroastrian view of holding Ahriman as the pioneer of all evils, with this apparent difference only that the Greek gods (or devils) send evils to man because of his performing actions unliked by them, while Ahriman is believed to cause and perpetrate evil because it is in his very nature to do so, i. e., to oppose the good created by God or Ahura-Mazda. But that really makes no difference. Ahriman is envious of Ahura-Mazda as much as the Greek gods are of man. Envy which is an evil, seems to be ingrained in the very nature of both, and both may equally be viewed as being ultimately responsible for all the evils of man. What has been urged against the Zoroastrian speculation, therefore, applies to this Greek view as well, and need not hence be repeated.

(c) The post-Socratic general Greek view of evil—The post-Socratic Greek thinkers, on the whole, we may say, had “a tendency to seek an explanation of evil in the recalcitrancy of matter, thus inclining towards dualism, but preserving securely the infinite perfection of God”.¹ There were, no doubt, important deviations from this view, but it is neither desirable nor possible to take up and consider here all the different views separately. We shall, therefore, confine our attention to the consideration of this general view of theirs, to which eminent philosophers like Plato, Plotinus and also Philo of Alexandria undoubtedly seem to have subscribed.

Plato regarded the material existence as a mere shadow of his real world of Ideas, a Rational System, and held the matter to be ‘a resistant to perfect rationality’, and an ‘element of imperfection, error and evil in the cosmos’². From Zeller’s point of view, Plotinus goes even beyond Plato in holding matter as “evil, indeed the primal evil; from it comes all evil in the material world, from the body the evil in the soul.”³ We are evil in that we are attached to matter, but evil is first and last essentially in matter. Thus, the cause at once of the weakness of Soul and of all its evil is Matter. The evil of Matter precedes the weakness, the vice; it is Primal Evil.⁴ In the opinion of Philo of Alexandria too “Matter, the condition of finite existence, is also the ground and medium of evil.”⁵ The

1 The Nature of Evil, p. 14.

2 Ibid. p. 14.

3 Ibid, p. 24.

4 Enneads I, VIII. 2 trans. by Stephen Mac Kenna and quoted in the Nature of Evil, p. 25.

5 The Nature of Evil p. 20.

Greek, in one way or another, ascribed evil to a certain fatal flaw or imperfection in the constitution of reality, yet somehow not in its ultimate constitution; so he called it matter¹. The ultimate constitution of reality, by whatever name it be called, is, thus, according to these thinkers, perfectly pure and free from evil, and so is also the human soul in its essential nature. It is only through its attachment with and submission to matter that evil gets associated with it. So far as its own original or intrinsic nature is concerned it is not at all contaminated by any evil whatsoever, for matter does not constitute an integral part of it.

Now, there is no doubt that these speculations of the three great thinkers under consideration, are far superior to those that we have hitherto considered. They undoubtedly contain some truths which, as we have already seen, also constitute some of the fundamental ingredients of Shankara's Brahmovada. That the ultimate reality is perfectly pure, that the human soul is also pure in its essential nature, and that the world is only a shadow or appearance of ultimate reality, whatever it be, are assertions which resound in our ears like those of Shankara himself. And so far as the question of evil is concerned, we cannot also deny, if we once admit the essential purity of the soul, that our association with matter is an evil, and a source of a good many other evils which characterize this world and life of ours. It is an empirical fact that we identify our self with our body; and this identification or association between them undoubtedly becomes the ground of the distinction that we make between the "I" and "mine" on the one hand and the "you" and "yours" on the other. And this, in its turn leads many of us to perform many a deed of injustice and even cruelty, not only in our individual but in social, racial or national capacities as well. How better the world would have been if its barriers originating from our identification with this or that material body were not a concrete fact ! That the soul's association with the body is the ground of all pain and pleasure is a fact that has also been recognized by Shankara. He has fully endorsed the Upanishadic view that one who gets free from the fetters of material body is also freed from pleasure and pain alike².

But what is the cause of this association ? Can matter alone be responsible for it ? Is the magnet, that attracts iron towards itself, alone the cause of this phenomenon of attraction ? If magnet alone were the whole and sole cause of attraction, it would make no distinction between

1 Ibid. p. 801.

2 SBS. I. 1. 4 and Chh. Up. VIII. 12. 1.

iron and ivory, or anything else. Does not, then, the fact of this distinction being made require us to pause before we say that magnet alone is its cause ? There is certainly something in the nature of iron too on account of which it allows the magnet to attract itself. Should we not then, on this analogy, say that there must be something already present in or along with the soul also which makes it get associated with matter. But the soul is said to be essentially pure. So the factor owing to which it allows itself to be caged and bondaged in matter must be something, though already present with it, really foreign to it. And does not the fact that the soul allows itself to be bondaged and thereby to bear all the evil consequences thereof show that this something is of the nature of ignorance ? But then ignorance and not matter will be the real and ultimate cause of all evils accruing to man.

We shall shortly return to the consideration of such a view of Shankara. Let us here note one more consequence of regarding matter as the primal evil. And it is that if matter were made the prime evil, there would never be an end of a soul's miseries. For, matter always remaining there what it is, the soul will never be able to get out of its clutches. But that would not only be a very gloomy view of the lot of the poor souls, it would also contradict the belief that a soul is pure in its nature. By nature we understand something that can never be separated from one whose nature it is. And as soul, on the view entertained here, will ever remain ensnared in and by matter, the consequent miseries and evils can very well be said to form a part and parcel of its nature.

Moreover, if matter be taken to be the primal evil and the cause of all evils, man's responsibility for evil will altogether vanish. But the idea that man is subject to evil for no fault of his own, really militates against our moral sense. It was probably for some such reason that the Hebrew regarded his God as a wise and just dispenser of both good and evil. The Biblical assertions—"Who ever perished, being innocent ?" or "Where were the righteous cut off ?"¹—may not be true to our every-day experience, but they certainly appeal to our moral sense more than to hold that we are slaves in the hands of matter and have no choice to make between good and evil.

"In modern philosophy of the West", as Prof. Atreya has rightly observed, "there are two main conceptions of evil; that of the Absolutists and that of the Humanists".²

1 The Book of Job Ch. IV. 7 (Compare Gita VI. 40).

2 The Philosophical Quarterly : October, 1932.

(d) **The Pragmatistic attitude towards evil**—According to the Humanists and Pragmatists evil in the world is as real as anything else. "They recognize evil as a real principle active in the world side by side with the forces that are operative to conquer it. A finite God struggling against the forces of Satan, and to a great extent aided by the growing wisdom and power of man is what satisfies them."¹ In their opinion, if God and man join hands, they will gradually succeed in driving the evil out and in finally bringing the millennium in this world. Our main concern, according to them is not to say "Why evil should exist at all", but to see "how we can lessen the actual amount of it".²

No doubt, the question of evil is more of practical nature than a mere theoretical question. And that our main or primary concern is to lessen evil or somehow to get rid of it, if possible, cannot be denied. The desirability and saneness of putting forth our best efforts in co-operating with anti-evil forces, here or elsewhere, can also not be over-emphasized. But then the question "how can evil be eradicated?" necessarily arises. And it is with regard to this question that the attitude of the Humanists and pragmatists does not seem to be a correct one. Unless we know the root cause of our evils, we fear we cannot succeed in our mission of eradicating them. The scientific and correct way of treating a sick person, we all know, consists in a correct diagnosis of his disease, and not in trying on him this or that medicine haphazardly. No doubt, our practical interest calls upon us as quick a cure as possible; but wisdom certainly lies on the side of a patient and careful treatment. Not only for fear of a mishap but also with a view to effect a permanent cure it is desirable to take up the question of its cause as seriously and soberly as that of its cure. We may, therefore, view the pragmatist's indifference towards the knowledge of the origin of evil with an explicit feeling of disapproval, irrespective of the fact that we quite agree with him in holding that the removal of evil is our most vital concern, and should hence be attended to in all right earnestness. But this removal, we believe, can be effected either by consulting a very competent doctor of evil, if there be any, or by trying to find out for ourselves, like Gautama (Buddha) its final cause and remedy.

Moreover, it is beyond our comprehension quite to see how this world as such, constituted as it is of both good and evil, can be ever

1 Philosophical Quarterly : October, 1932, p. 244.

2 Ibid (quoted from James' Pluralistic Universe p. VIII).

cured of all its evils. Fire so long as it is fire cannot be rendered cold. We may, of course, get aside and escape from its scorching heat, if we mind it, one by one or conjointly; but to think in terms of divesting fire of its true nature certainly seems to be attempting an impossibility. Have not our most ingenious scientific investigations and inventions, which may be viewed as means of fighting out some evils, let loose forces of destruction and death and other evils simultaneously? Can we not say that even to-day when man may be said to have conquered nature in a considerable measure there yet exist innumerable and immense unknown and unconquered such vistas of that very nature as may continue to be the causes of man's future frustrations and troubles? Will not the observation of Newton, which he expressed in the words "I have been only gathering pebbles on sea-shore," always remain a standing fact? However bounteous and benevolent in her gifts nature may be deemed to be, the proverbial stepmotherly treatment of the environments cannot also be ignored. One may dream of Rama-Rajya, or like Plato, of a happy time when philosophers will be kings, and kings, philosophers and all things good and well with the world; but the standing facts make us seriously doubt the realization of such a dream. Even Rama-Rajya, if it ever existed, saw its last days, and was then followed by reigns of very much dissimilar nature. The point that the world as such is a blend of both evil and good and is in all likelihood to remain so has already been considerably dwelt upon, and need not be further stressed. So, let us now turn to the Western Absolutist and look at evil from his point of view. But, as it is not possible here to take up the views of all the absolutists, we shall regard Mr. Bradley as their representative and confine our attention to the consideration of his view exclusively.

(e) Bradley on evils—According to Bradley evils, like other finite facts, belong to the world of appearances only. By this, however he does not mean that they are not to be reckoned with. In the world of our finite experience they are to be regarded as real as any other finite fact. Evils, Bradley holds, may be classified into three types, viz. (1) evils of the nature of pain, (2) evils of the nature of failure to realize ends and (3) evils that belong to the category of immorality.¹

With regard to pain, Bradley is of opinion that in the world there is actually more pleasure than pain. He, however, does not deny the existence of pain altogether. The subordination of pain to pleasure in the world as he sees it leads him to justify, as he believes, in inferring an overwhelming balance of pleasure in the Absolute. In his Absolute the

1 Vide Appearance & Reality, p. 174.

evil of pain is somehow 'neutralized' or 'merged', but not 'negatived' or 'destroyed.' As to why there is this evil of pain in the world Bradley, it appears, has got nothing to say. For him "pain actually exists," and is somehow or other owned or embraced by the Absolute itself.¹

Evil in the form of "waste, failure and confusion", Bradley seems to believe, is due to our erroneous selection of partial ends. Such evils, he thinks, cease to be evils in, and from the point of, the Absolute; for our apparent failures to realize our partial ends may serve its wider purposes. In his own words. "The ends which fail.....are ends selected by ourselves and selected more or less erroneously. They are too partial, as we have taken them, and, if included in a larger end to which they are relative, they cease to be failures. They, in short, subserve a wider scheme, and in that they are realized..I do not mean, of course, that every finite end, as such is realized. I mean that it is lost, and becomes an element in a wider idea which is one with existence.....even our one-sidedness, our insistence and our disappointment, may somehow all subserve a harmony and go to perfect it. The aspects of idea and of existence may be united in one great whole, in which evil, and even ends, as such, disappear."²

Coming to the problem of moral evil or immorality Bradley observes that morality implies not only an opposition or inconsistency between an end and the existent subject, the higher self and the lower self in other words, but also a feeling of struggle on the part of the existent self. Here he says that "...we have an idea in a subject, an end which strives to gain reality; and on the other side, we have the existence of the same subject. This existence not merely fails to correspond, but struggles adversely, and the collision is felt as such.....We suffer within ourselves a contest of the good and bad wills and a certainty of evil." "Moral evil", he goes on to say, "exists only in moral experience and that experience in its essence is full of inconsistency. For morality desires unconsciously, with the suppression of evil, to become wholly non-moral. It certainly would shrink from this end, but it thus unknowingly desires the existence and perpetuity of evil.....Morality itself, which makes evil, desires in evil to remove a condition of its own being. It labours essentially to pass into a super-moral and therefore a non-moral sphere."³ This speculation

1 Vide Appearance And Reality, p. p. 174—76.

2 Appearance And Reality, p. 177.

3 Ibid. p. 178.

makes Bradley think that moral evil being necessary for moral good is itself in a way a sort of good. "It is enlisted and it plays a part in a higher good end, and in this sense, unknowingly is good."¹ The higher end or "Heaven's design" may according to him, be realized equally well in and through the activities of both the moral and the immoral men, "...the discord as such disappears, if the harmony is made wide enough."² Bradley's Absolute is thus not moral, much less immoral, but super-moral or non-moral. "Morality cannot (as such)," he says, "be ascribed to the Absolute."³

Thus, in the case of moral evil, as in that of the evil of failure or frustration, the whole weight of Bradley's subtle discourse seems to lie on showing that evil as such exists only in and for finite beings and that it gets, in some mysterious way not definitely known to us, somehow or other, transformed into something non-evil. Bradley, however, does not hold, it appears, to be the same case with the evil of pain, for it is simply held to be weighed down, however overwhelmingly it may be, in the Absolute by 'a balance of clear pleasure.'⁴ If we have rightly understood Bradley, we fail to see the reason for this distinction. All the same, recapitulating his position with regard to evil on the whole, we may say, in Dr. Atrey's words, that, according to Bradley, "...the consciousness of evil is only a partial vision, that evil is merely an appearance, and that in the Reality as a Whole it is "over-ruled and subdued."⁵

Now, Bradley's discernment that evil is due to finitude and to our incomplete and erroneous vision of things, seems, no doubt, to be full of sufficient insight. That such a view of evil is not tantamount to denying the existence of evil in the world we can very well see. For, so long as our finitude and incomplete and erroneous vision are there, the existence of evil in the world is also, ipso facto, there. To urge that evil is here said to be only an appearance, and is therefore not admitted as a real evil would simply mean to miss the real significance of Mr. Bradley's view. No doubt, evil is an appearance according to Bradley; but so are other concrete facts as well. A layman may regard both of them as real. Bradley would not object to that. But to a reflecting person who undertakes to distinguish between what we may call really real and apparently real only, Bradley would certainly say that evil along with all other so-called constituents of the world does not deserve to be called real, for it does not stand the test of reality. But so far as the practical question

1 Appearance And Reality, p. 178.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. p. 174.

4 Ibid. p. 176.

5 Philosophical Quarterly, October, 1932, p. p. 243-244,

of dealing with evil is concerned Bradley's stand with regard to it is in no way less realistic than that of any uncompromising believer in the reality of the world of finite objects.

Nevertheless, we cannot resist pointing out that Bradley has virtually failed in giving a satisfactory account of the original appearance of evil, in fact, of all finitude. The question "How any partial appearance, such as evil, error and finitude, etc., arises in the Perfect Absolute Whole is not answered satisfactorily"¹ by him. The apparent evils are, no doubt, attributed by Bradley, to our incomplete and erroneous vision due to our finitude, but the question 'how this finitude itself came to be or appear there' has received scanty justice at his hands. And here lies probably the very crux of his philosophy.

Secondly, Bradley's conception of self as an appearance, as being, in this respect, on the same par with evils and other appearances, is not free from a tinge of ultimate pessimism. His poor 'self' seems to be unfortunately destined to a life of pain and pleasure and good and evil both. It is essentially bound down by its inherent inconsistencies and as such can never have better prospects. It is, no doubt, an ingredient or constituent of his Absolute, but that can provide little comfort of consolation to it. The idea or the existence of the Perfect Absolute does not and cannot mitigate its evils and sufferings; for, on Bradley's views, there is nothing that can help it as such out of its finitude; and with finitude evils and sufferings are necessarily bound. Bradley has found within his 'self' nothing but 'jarring tendencies' and an 'unmitigated strife,' and has thus condemned it to the sort of life that is its at the present time. The jarring tendencies and so on are, no doubt, subdued in the Absolute. But what is that to the poor self? For along with its jarring tendencies it also gets subdued, and is, as self, probably lost.

IV A summary description of the Indian thinkers' general attitude towards evil

Now coming to Indian thinkers we may say that to them, with the only exception of the Charvakas, evil, in different forms of 'duhkha' or 'klesha' and in the form of what leads to it, seems to have been a veritable bugbear, and the freedom from it, probably, the highest concern of their life. If we exclude the Charvaka philosophy, it may be conveniently held

1 Philosophical Quarterly, October, 1932, p. 244.

that "every system, provedic or antivedic, is moved to speculation by a spiritual disquiet at the sight of the evils that cast a gloom over life in this world."¹ It was the sight of evil in the form of pain and suffering, death and disease, that turned Gautama, a prince, into a monk, and laid down through him the foundation of so vast a philosophy as that of the Buddhists is. The fact of evil in the form of 'duhkha' has, indeed, been recognized by Buddha as one of his four noble truths. In Samkhya-karika too the impact of experience of the three kinds of suffering has been held as being the very origin of one's desire to know its cause (i. e. of the very philosophical reflections about it).²

As a matter of fact, the problem of evil, according to Indian thinkers, is an ever standing problem, and its solution, a pressing need of human life. "The world as such, Indian philosophers have thought, cannot be freed from evil. But it is, they think, possible for every individual to perfect himself and to save himself from evil and suffering."³ Moksha or liberation from the evils of this world, therefore, has almost unanimously been held to be the highest goal of human life. No doubt, this state of liberation has been somewhat differently viewed and named by thinkers belonging to different schools of thought; but in so far as the question of the cessation or annihilation of pain and other evils is concerned, they are all at one. The recognition of the possibility of an ever-lasting extinction of all evils is as common to them as the recognition of the fact of there being so much evil in this world.

Just as in the case of a disease the greatest concern of a patient is the removal of it, so also in the case of all evils, the different systems seem to agree, the most important question for the sufferers therefrom is as to how to get rid of them. But the removal of a malady necessitates the right diagnosis of it. Similarly the solution of the problem of evil raises the question of its origination. An effect can be removed only by removing its cause. The knowledge of the cause or origin of evil, therefore, has been as earnestly sought as the freedom from it, by almost all the systems of thought in India. And we may add that with regard to its origin too there seems to be a striking affinity between them. For, it is some sort of ignorance that seems to have been viewed, by almost all the systems, as the ultimate cause of our bondage and through it of all evils.

1 Chatterjee and Datta : An Intro. to Indian Phil., p. 13.

2 Samkhya-Karika (दुःखत्रयाभिघातात् जिज्ञासा तदभिघातके हेतौ)

3 Dr. Atreya: Philosophical Quarterly : October, 1932, p. 245.

And this, we may say, follows from their almost common recognition of jnana or knowledge, in some form or the other, as being an indispensable means of bringing about a person's liberation from them. For, if one's liberation from evils is held to be dependent upon knowledge, one's bondage or evils have got to be ascribed to ignorance.

It is, no doubt, true that the different schools have described this evil-originating ignorance rather differently; but so far as the important fact of its being a factor in one's bondage and evils is concerned, there is little disagreement among them. At any rate, the view that our own ignorance is the ultimate cause of the evil with which we are beset in this world may at least be said to be a most common and characteristic view of the Indian philosophers.¹ We shall not, therefore, take up the consideration of the views of different schools separately, but shall confine our attention to that of Shankara's view alone, for he may be rightly said to be the most prominent advocate of the ignorance-view of evil.

V—Shankara's view of evil

(a) **Evil, an actual fact**—To Shankara, as to other Indian philosophers, evil is a hard empirical fact. It is not only in the form of physical pain or mental affliction, but also in the form of immoral thoughts and deeds, that the presence of evil in this world has been vividly recognized by him. As a matter of fact, he viewed the world as being full of manifold physical, mental and moral evils. Birth and old age, death and disease², attachment and hatred, and fear and infatuation are some of the many evils of this world which are, according to Shankara, commonly experienced by all of us³.

What is moral evil to Western philosophers has been called 'papa', 'adharma' or 'anartha' in Indian philosophy. And when Shankara speaks of our incessant thinking about the worldly objects as being the cause of all 'anartha'⁴, it is primarily the moral evil that he has in his mind. He has definitely maintained that our repeated mental visualizing of objects engenders in our minds a desire to have them; and this desire, in its turn, becomes a potent motive force that impels us to perform evil deeds (papa)⁵. So, by evil Shankara means not only physical pain, or unpleasant mental states, but also moral evils which may be said, in a sense, to

1 See IP. Vol. II, p. 27 and HIP. Vol. I, p. p. 74 and 76.

2 SB. Katha Up. II. 5.

3 SBS. I. 3. 2.

3 SBG. II. 63.

5 Ibid. III. 37.

be even greater evils than physical or mental afflictions. For, according to Shankara, it is these moral evils that are responsible for a person's pain and the like, in this life as well as in the life to come. It is really they that make a man go down on the ladder of life¹, and stand in his way to the realization of the summum bonum of his life².

(b) Shankara, not a pessimist—Shankara's recognition of the various evils in this world, however, does not warrant us to view him as a pessimist. For, it is not only the evil but also the good of the world and of our life in it that has been duly recognized by him. If he has strongly disparaged the sorrows and other evils of it, he has also highly spoken of the worth of its moral good, and has not failed even to observe in it the presence of such values as pleasures, happiness, and the like. According to him pleasure and happiness are as actually experienced facts of life³ as pain and grief. Of course, he is not prepared to regard the worldly or even celestial pleasures or prosperity as the highest end of human life; but that is not tantamount to denying the fact of their actual presence there. We can rightly call only that person a pessimist who pronounces life to be irredeemably miserable and feels helpless about its ills. But Shankara would be the last person to subscribe to this attitude of mind. His is, in fact, the attitude of a great optimist who not only strongly believes in the possibility of attaining the highest happiness and existence in and through human life alone, but also in sincere and assiduous efforts actually to attain it here and now. If he has amplified the afflictions and imperfections of our life and world, he has done it simply with a view to helping us in accelerating and augmenting our endeavours worthy of our highest goal. His view of human life, indeed, is full of hope and promises. He does not at all brood over its ills, but always regards it as a golden opportunity for the attainment of its greatest good. Will it be just and correct to dub such a person as a pessimist ?

(c) Causes of evils—At places Shankara has mentioned improper desires, anger, infatuation, attachment, greed, selfishness, pursuit of prohibited courses, and the like, as the causes of so many of our evils⁴. Our improper desires, according to him, are, briefly speaking, our main enemies and the causes of all our evils⁵. And there seems to be little doubt

1 BG. XIV. 18.

2 Vide SB. Katha Up. II. 24.

3 SBG. V. 23 (अनुभूते सुखहेतोः ...)

4 Vide SBG. XVI. 9-21, and SB. Br. Up. IV. 4. 5.

5 SBG. III. 37 (काम.....सर्वलोकशत्रुः यस्मिन्निता सर्वानर्थप्राप्तिः)

that a very large number of evils in the world owe their existence to these causes. It cannot be denied that the world would have been by far a better and happier world if these causes of evils were not operative in it.

But all our evils, it may be pointed out, do not owe their existence to these causes. What possible relation, it may be asked, can there be between earthquakes, hailstorms, epidemics and the like, on the one hand, and our improper desires, etc. on the other ? That there seems to be no apparent connection between them cannot, of course, be denied. But to a believer in the 'doctrine of Karma', as Shankara was, the presence of such evils also does not present an insurmountable difficulty. Like all other evils these evils too are sought to be explained by him through the agency of evil karmas (actions) originating from our evil desires, etc. And the question of the tenability of one's belief in this doctrine we have already considered in the preceding chapter. Here it may simply be added that in this connection we have no choice other than our conceding to regard our sufferings and sorrows, irrespective of the source from which they come, either as unearned ones or as being the necessary consequences of our own previous actions. Our empirical methods, observation, etc., of course, cannot help us in making our choice here. The only thing that can be availed of is our moral consciousness. And if we closely consult it and seek its consistent verdict pertaining to the problem in hand, our choice inevitably tends to fall on the side of the latter rather than on that of the former alternative.

Thus, in the hands of Shankara all other evils of the world come to be subordinated to moral evils, for all our afflictions and agonies, whether here or elsewhere, are believed by him to be due to our own evil doings. Nobody else, whether godly or devilish in nature, nor even matter which is in fact neither, can mete out to us what we have not ourselves earned. Such a high and rigid conception of morality is undoubtedly conspicuous by its absence in the West. Kant, of course, had a peep into it; but he also failed to bring out all its implications adequately. Some people, we cannot say why, seem to be temperamentally opposed or indifferent to it. But if morality and immorality be taken as real facts or forces to be reckoned with, and our moral consciousness as something forming a part and parcel of the very texture of nature, and not as a mere figment of our fancy, the doctrine of karma or actions, we may say, should certainly have a greater consideration than it has hitherto received from them. But that is none of our concerns here. So far as Shankara is concerned we can definitely say that he has duly assigned a primordial place to moral

evils, and that his view is more appealing to our practical reason or moral consciousness than the belief in our unearned sufferings.

But, then, one may reasonably enquire into the cause of our moral evils themselves. If nobody or nothing other than ourselves is responsible for all our sufferings and other evils, how is it that we ourselves sow the seeds of bitter fruits to be reaped by our own selves ? Why do we perform immoral deeds at all ?

Socrates, it is said, held that virtue is knowledge. One may, of course, challenge his assertion, and point out that virtue does not lie so much in knowing as in doing the right things. When Duryodhana, for example, on being admonished by Lord Krishna to sift dharma from adharma and to respect the rights of the Pandavas by giving them at least five villages for their subsistence, said to him that he really knew dharma (virtue) and adharma (vice) both, but was not somehow able to appropriate the former and to discard the latter, for he was driven to obey the dictates of some being seated in his heart, as it were, he may rightly be said to have advanced a concrete criticism of the view of Socrates. But there is certainly a good deal of sense in what Socrates has said. Knowledge of the right may not be equivalent to doing the right; but it is certainly an essential condition of the morality of one's deeds. It is not only a pre-requisite of doing the right, but also a necessary constituent factor of the morality of our actions. For, it is only the voluntarily performed actions which are the proper objects of our moral judgements; and voluntary actions, we know, are those actions which are performed with a clear consciousness of an end or ends to be achieved. Moreover, it cannot be denied that many of our immoral deeds have their origin in our partial or clouded vision of things. That narrowness of vision and the consequent narrowness of our interests do sometimes give rise to real moral conflicts, has been well recognized by Mr. Mackenzie when he says that ".....each man's moral life may be regarded as a universe in itself.This universe may be a broad one or a narrow one.....This narrowness is a source of conflict. It causes the individual good to appear to be in opposition to the general good of humanity."¹ Bradley also, as we have seen, regards our finite, incomplete, or erroneous vision as a fundamental cause of evils. In fact, our attachment to our own bodily self and to those whom we view as ours, and our indifference or hatred towards those whom we view as others, or as interfering with the interests of our

1 A Manual of Ethics, p. 419.

finite selves, are the necessary offshoots of our finite vision itself. One whose vision is not thus vitiated is bound to look at all persons as members of one joint family, and at their interests as his own. That attachment to some and hatred towards others originate from our narrow visions is a matter of our common experience, and, hence cannot be denied. To be morally good is the same as to have 'an extended vision' of one's true self. In the words of Dr. Tagore, "To live the life of goodness is to live the life of all. Pleasure is for one's own self, but goodness is concerned with the happiness of all humanity and for all time. To live in perfect goodness is to realise one's life in the infinite."¹

Shankara took his stand on this common empirical ground, and viewed a person's erroneous identification with his body as the root cause of all his further evils². This identification he has called *adhyasa* or superimposition. It is, according to him, something natural, something deeply ingrained in the very nature of all sentient beings. All the same it cannot be held to be real, for, as Shankara has shown, it implies a sort of confusion between the subject and object of knowledge. The knower, he has rightly maintained, can never be the known, nor the known the knower.³ Just as the knower of a tree is different from the tree, or the tree, from its knower, so also the knower of a body, including the sense-organs, etc., cannot be the body and the body, the knower of it.⁴ This being so, one's identification with one's body has got to be taken as nothing but ignorance. This ignorance is the root cause of our attachment to some, and of hatred towards others. It is primarily on account of this erroneous or narrow vision that people perform this or that act of injustice to others and indulge in all sorts of anti-social or anti-human behaviour. And the result is that they have inevitably to bear the evil consequences of all their immoral deeds. All their sorrows and sufferings are thus ultimately rooted in their ignorance⁵, the beginning of which cannot reasonably be traced to anything else whatsoever. It is, therefore, said to be *anadi* or beginningless.⁶

So long as this ignorance is there it is futile to think in terms of full freedom from evils. Even if a person performs no immoral deed in

1 Dr. Tagore : *Sadhana*, p. 56-57.

2 SBS. Intro., and II. 3. 45 (जीवो ह्यविद्या.....दुःखानुभवः)

3 SBS. Intro.

4 Vide *Upadesha-Sahasri* (Prose-section), 34.

5 SBS. II. 3. 45 (जीवस्य .. दुःखप्राप्तिरविद्यानिमित्तैव) and I. 3. 8.

(तम इति शोकादिकारणमविद्योच्यते)

6 SBS. Intro. p. 4.

his present life, he has got to experience the inevitable effects of his innumerable actions performed by him in his past lives. These as well as the actions that he will necessarily perform in his present life will continue to keep him in bondage, and bondage is itself a great evil which, according to Shankara, can never be put an end to through the mere performance of actions, whether good or bad¹. This, however, does not mean that good actions are good for nothing. Far from being so, they are not only indispensable for a happy existence here or hereafter, but also an absolutely essential condition of that enlightenment or illumination which Shankara has called *jnana* or *anubhava* and which he has rightly regarded as the only cure of that beginningless nescience or ignorance which according to him is the root-cause of all evils. The only thing that has got to be borne in mind is that these actions are to be performed in a disinterested way, or as a matter of duty, and not for the sake of their fruits. If so performed, they will cleanse one's mind and heart of all their stains and will thereby prepare the ground for the dawn of the light of that knowledge which alone can dispel the darkness of that ignorance which has kept us in bondage and in its concomitant evils from beginningless time.

By calling ignorance beginningless Shankara, however, does not mean to suggest that it constitutes our essence or real nature. For, if he had so viewed it he could not have spoken of its eradication through the right knowledge of our true Self. According to him its extinction is not a matter of mere pious wish, a phenomenon to be brought about in an unknown far-off land or in an inconceivably remote time. On the other hand, he speaks of it as something that can be, and is, definitely realized by those who fulfil the requisite conditions of its realization, here and now. Its extinction for Shankara is neither a matter of uncertain inference nor of a blind belief in the words of sacred scriptures, but an actual fact of indubitable experience. One may, like Dr. Tsanoff², believe it or not, but with Shankara, as with the Upanishadic seers, it is a fact of all facts, and the highest truth of all truths. And in view of the conviction with which they speak, it does not seem to be proper to doubt what they say, unless there be sufficient and sure ground to do so. As a matter of fact, the essence of an intellectual error or ignorance, as that of any other

1 Vide Chapter VII.

2 See *The Nature of Evil*, p. 10 ("Brahmanism hoped for deliverance from evil through eventual absorption in Brahman; its pessimism was positive, but its path of salvation uncertain.")

evil, as Dr. Tagore has nicely put it, consists in its "impermanence, for it cannot accord with the whole. Every moment it is being corrected by the totality of things and keeps changing its aspect."¹ But if so, what wonder is there if one's evil of ignorance is entirely annihilated if one somehow attains the point of view of the totality or oneness of things themselves.

(d) A critical appreciation of Shankara's view of evil—To view evil as being there due to beginningless ignorance is apparently to attribute beginninglessness to evil also. If ignorance that is responsible for evil has ever been there, evil, it follows, must also have been there from beginningless time. Ignorance itself is an evil, and so in positing a beginningless ignorance as the cause of all other evils, evil itself, it may be pointed out, has been posited as being a beginningless cause of evil itself. And this, one might say, is not to explain evil at all. To say that something is beginningless is obviously to express one's inability or failure to trace its cause, and to fail to trace the cause of a thing or phenomenon is the same as to fail in explaining it. To attempt an explanation of evil through the agency of another evil is to explain it through itself which is to commit, it may be urged, what is technically called the fallacy of *Petitio Principii*, and is hence either a very faulty explanation or no explanation at all. So Shankara's view of evil, positing as it does a beginningless Ignorance, which is itself an evil, as the ultimate cause of it, is not, it might be added, a satisfactory view of evil. It does not explain evil, but only posits it as something inexplicable. To call it beginningless is really to admit its inexplicability, though apparently it may not seem to be so.

It is, no doubt, true, we admit, that Shankara has traced the origin of all evils to Ignorance which is itself an evil and has been said to be beginningless. But that, in our opinion, does not really provide us with sufficient ground to stand for the condemnation of his view of evil. If not evil, we may ask, what else can reasonably be deemed as an explanation of evil? We cannot trace the origin of evil to what is good, for that would involve the good in self-contradiction, and would thereby militate against a very fundamental demand of our rational self. Nor can we say that evil originates in something that is indifferent to it, i. e., neither good nor evil. For, such an assertion would amount to our denial of causal relation itself. In case we admit that evil comes out of something

1 Dr. Tagore : *Sadhana*, p. 49.

which is of a nature indifferent to it, we shall be driven to hold that any thing can come out of anything. But such a stand is not at all justified by facts as we know them. So, the only alternative left with us is to view only evil as the cause of evil. The Zoroastrians and the Greeks may, in this respect, be said to be right, for they sought the explanation of evil in something or the other of evil nature, and not in God whom they held to be free from it. So, to have viewed Ignorance, which is itself an evil, as the cause of other evils may be said to be a point that goes in favour of, and not against, Shankara's view of evil.

Of course, to hold that Ignorance, which is the ultimate cause of all other evils, is beginningless and as such something the origin of which cannot be traced to something else, may not appear a satisfactory view to those whose mind is somehow so constituted that it indiscriminately seeks an explanation of every thing, including even the first principles and its own simple states, forgetting that there are certain things which by their very nature refuse to admit any explanation of themselves. But to those persons who are prepared to see in Ignorance an evil which cannot be further explained, but not prepared to allow themselves to be dragged into an infinite regress by seeking explanation of an evil in another evil, and of that in another, and so on ceaselessly, Shankara's explanation of evils through the ultimate evil of Ignorance is likely to appear as a most satisfactory explanation. As we have already seen, it is not sound to seek the explanation of evil either in matter or in any conscious being like Ahriman of the Zoroastrians; and to hold that God Himself is the originator of evils would be all the more absurd. That evil cannot come out of good or out of something which is neither good nor evil, we have just pointed out. We are, therefore, naturally driven to view something like ignorance, which is itself an evil, to be the ultimate explanatory principle of all other evils. And in doing so we are not, rightly speaking, guilty of committing the fallacy of *Petitio Principii*. Who does not know that 'contempt breeds contempt', or that selfishness, which is a moral evil, is the mother of so many other evils, moral or otherwise ? But shall we be right in saying that such beliefs involve the fallacy of *Petitio Principii* ? If we are not open to the charge of committing this fallacy while entertaining these and many other such beliefs, how can it be said that this fallacy is committed by one who traces the origin of all worldly evils to the ultimate evil of ignorance which has been associated with all living beings from beginningless time ?

It may, no doubt, be admitted that the ignorance that has been posited by Shankara as the ultimate explanation of all evils has not been explained by him, but that does not mean that he has failed to explain other evils as well. So far as at least other evils are concerned, it may conveniently be said that his view of their explanation is free from all those defects from which other explanations which we have considered here, suffer. In the first place, it does not deprive men of their freedom and responsibility for doing good or bad deeds, and so does not militate against our common moral consciousness. For, according to it, it is our own ignorance which makes us act immorally, and which, if we so desire and will, we can put an end to through our own sincere and well-directed efforts. Secondly, it does not present to us a dark or pessimistic view of our life as such, envisaging as it does the possibility of any seeker of truth to get out of all evil for ever. In the third place, it does not fail to do justice to the nature of the world as it is, in so far as it is neither over-optimistic nor even unduly pessimistic. Neither it thinks in terms of having a heaven of pure good on this earth, nor does it condemn this world of ours ever to be an abode of unmixed evil. And lastly, it does not err by seeking the explanation of evil either in its opposite, the good, or in something which is indifferent to its production. For, in tracing the ultimate cause of all evils to ignorance Shankara has traced it to something which is itself of evil nature, and as such quite capable of engendering them.

The merits of Shankara's view of evil may briefly be put forth in the following words.

Firstly, it is full of great hope and promise for all human beings. By holding their own ignorance as the ultimate cause of all their evils, it undoubtedly instils into their minds the thought of the possibility of its removal through their own efforts and thereby of the possibility of their extricating themselves from the clutches of all evils.

Secondly, by recognizing the value of moral and intellectual efforts of human beings it has a very salutary effect on their life which it tends to discipline and to raise to a level of values which is definitely higher than that of the common man.

Thirdly, it rightly attaches greater importance to the actual extinction of evils than to the mere theoretical knowledge about them. The Humanists also, of course, have tried to do the same thing, but, as we have said before, they have committed the mistake of believing that the world as such can be freed from all evils. Shankara, however, does not think in terms of divesting the world as such of its evils. His main concern

is to free the individual persons from them. His is, therefore, we may say, more feasible a point of view than that of the Humanists. For, it is easier for every individual to mend and modify his own life than it is to change the nature of the world. One may, of course, succeed in conducing to some extent to the happiness of others; but moral perfection or good, as Kant believed, is not a thing to be given by others. It is to be cultivated and achieved through one's own efforts. Moreover, if all individual persons get freed from all evils, there would, then, remain no cause for them to bother about the world as such.

Even the conception of a beginningless evil seems to be happier than that of one which has a beginning. For, an evil that could begin once can also begin again, unless there be an ever-standing counter-acting adequate cause or causes to prevent it from doing so. That such preventive causes do not yet exist in the world goes without saying; and there is also no indication as to their coming into existence in near future. And even if it be supposed that there is a possibility of the world being so transformed in very remote future that such causes would come to exist, there can be no guarantee of their permanence in it. What can come into existence is equally liable to go out of it. But the same thing cannot be said to be true about what is beginningless. The very fact that it is said to be beginningless implies that it has had or can have no beginning. So, if the ignorance of an individual which has been postulated as the ultimate cause of all his evils once gets eradicated, there is no possibility of its future recurrence in his case. And so far as its final eradication is concerned, there is no contradiction involved in it. That ignorance is removed by knowledge, just as darkness, by light, is quite a familiar fact with all of us. Of howsoever a long-standing an ignorance may be, it cannot stand before knowledge. And the moment it is duly dispelled, it is dispelled for ever. The so-called beginninglessness of the evil of ignorance does not and cannot make it impregnable to knowledge, just as the beginninglessness of darkness cannot render it impenetrable by light.

That ignorance by its very nature is something inexplicable we have already seen in chapter V. It may, however, be added here that the ultimate evil of ignorance has got to be taken as beginningless; for no origin can reasonably be assigned to it. As we have seen before, the origin of an evil cannot be traced to God, for to do so is to undermine his Godliness itself. An evil-originating God cannot obviously be a good God. He who sends so many evils to us for no fault of ours must really be a very cruel and malvolent God. Nor can we say that evil originates in the very nature of the individual souls themselves. For, in the first place, no

individual, unless he be supposed to be already under the darkening influence of ignorance itself, would ever sow the seeds of thorny thistles in his own way. And, then, it cannot be said to be true of all individuals that they are by nature vicious. So far as at least the human beings are concerned it would be truer to say that they are essentially good than to hold that their nature is essentially bad. Goodness indubitably seems to be more deeply ingrained in their nature than viciousness. And even if it be admitted for argument's sake that viciousness also constitutes a part and parcel of their nature, it cannot be made intelligible why this viciousness is used by them to create troubles for their own selves:

To suggest that they create troubles and evils not for themselves but for others and so each individual has to experience troubles and evils created for him by others, would also be of no avail. In the first place, such an explanation of evil cannot explain all evils in the world. For instance, such evils as earthquakes, epidemics, famines and floods cannot be reasonably believed to have been the work of any finite individual or individuals like us who are living on this planet. Moreover, one's moral evil cannot be said to have its origin in another person or being whosoever he may be.

Where lies, then, the origin of such evils ? Can we say that there are invisible super-human evil beings who inculcate in our minds evil thoughts and immoral desires and also cause evils like earthquakes and epidemics ? Or, shall we maintain that nature is responsible for them ? The first supposition would be just like the supposition of an Ahriman or Satan, and the second like that of matter, the untenability of which we have already seen. What may be added here is this that in case these unwarranted suppositions were taken as true, the beginninglessness of evil in the agencies referred to in them would thereby be, ipso facto, established, or else the origin of the evil residing in them will have to be traced further. And this process will either lead to *regresus ad infinitum*, or to the acknowledgement of beginninglessness of evil, to whom-soever or what-soever it may ultimately be traced. Thus, there seems to be no escape from the acceptance of a fundamental or beginningless evil whatever it be. Such an acceptance or belief, rightly speaking, points to the richness or soundness of one's thought rather than to the paucity of it. So, in believing the root cause of all evils, viz., ignorance, to be beginningless Shankara may really be said to have rightly believed in a necessity of thought itself, and not to have had recourse to something unreasonable.

Moreover, the fact that ignorance must be taken as a beginningless something is also vindicated by our actual experience of it. For, in spite

of the fact that all of us some-time or the other experience it when we feel or say 'I do not or did not know this or that', none of us can say as to when this not-knowing about this or that thing actually began. If we cannot assign a definite origin to our empirical ignorance here and now, how can we hope to stretch our imagination so far as to trace the origin of that ignorance which has been viewed as being the cause of our very finitude ? In fact the question "why there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection, or, in other words, why there is creation at all. We must take it for granted that it could not be otherwise; that creation must be imperfect, must be gradual, and that it is futile to ask the question, why are we ?"¹ We are there. Our ignorance is there. And it is not possible for us to say when it began. The utmost that can be said about it is to say that it must be beginningless.

From what has been maintained here, and in chapter VII, with regard to the importance and necessity of moral efforts for one's emancipation from all evils and for the realization of the greatest good of one's life, it is quite obvious that Shankara's view of evil in the world is not prejudicial to the moral or value-aspect of human life.

Brahma or our true Self may be beyond good and evil both; but what is that to us as such who, while labouring under the darkening influence of our beginningless Ignorance, not only firmly believe that we are finite beings but also always act upto that belief ? So long as this finitude is written deep in one's mind, both the good and the evil are and will remain there; and in case one takes up the problem of evil in all right earnestness, not only theoretically but practically as well, one has got to pursue the good and to avoid the evil in all the walks and phases of one's life. It is only by pursuing the good quite earnestly and exclusively that, in the opinion of Shankara, a person can qualify himself for a correct vision of his essential infinite nature.² The distinction between good and evil has been as clearly recognized by Shankara as the distinction between factual and value judgements themselves. His metaphysical distinction between the finite and the infinite is not at all inconsistent with his moral distinction between the good and the evil. On the other hand, the moral distinction needs to be emphasized, as it has been done by Shankara in the interest of the metaphysical distinction itself. For, the clear confirmation of the truth of the latter, partly but necessarily, depends upon the strict

1 Rabindra Nath Tagore : *Sadhana*, p. 47.

2 SBS., I. I. 1.

observation of the former. To deny it is to confuse between the finite and the infinite points of view themselves. If, and so long as, this distinction is clearly borne in mind, the distinction between the positive and negative moral values, which Shankara has explicitly stressed, cannot be overlooked. So, all such remarks as that of Dr. Tsanoff when he says that ".....the description of evil as essentially imperfection or limitation of finite being, the reduction of the antithesis good-evil to infinite-finite, replacing as it does a moral by a metaphysical distinction, virtually dismisses all the moral or value-aspects of the problem"¹, are beside the mark, so far as at least Shankara's view of evil is concerned.

That ethics and metaphysics are very closely associated with each other, and so cannot be placed in water-tight separate compartments, is a truth which needs no elucidation here. We can only say that metaphysics has got to take into consideration the verdicts of our moral consciousness, and that our ethical views are necessarily affected and determined by our metaphysical beliefs.² It is not only physical phenomena and other such problems alone that a metaphysician feels called upon to explain; even ethical problems have got sometimes to be metaphysically explained. So, if the problem of evil, which may be said to be primarily an ethical problem, leads one to an essentially metaphysical speculation about it, there is nothing objectionable or unwarranted in it. And that the distinction between moral good and evil is not wiped out by its metaphysical explanation given by Shankara, we have already seen. To say that it is, is to betray one's ignorance of, or confusion between, the two points of view of Shankara—the absolute and the finite. From the finite or practical point of view Shankara has recognized, as we have seen, all the distinctions including the distinction between the good and the evil. And that is what morality requires.

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The Nature of Evil, p. 370.

Vide Rashdall's Theory of Good & Evil, (Second Edition) Vol. II, Book III, Chap. I, p. p. 189—246.

[illegible]

*The Doctrines of Shri Ramanuja,
Nimbarka, Madhva and Vallabhacharya*

‘कार्यावस्थः कारणावस्थश्च स्थूलसूक्ष्मचिदचिद्वस्तुशरीरः परमपुरुष एव
निर्गुणवादाश्च परस्य ब्रह्मणो हेयगुणसम्बन्धाभावादुपपद्यन्ते ।’—

(श्रीरामानुजाचार्य)

‘मूर्त्तिमूर्त्तादिकं विश्वं ब्रह्मणि स्वकारणे भिन्नाभिन्नसम्बन्धेन स्थातुमर्हति
भेदाभेदव्यपदेशादहिकुण्डलवत् ।’ (श्रीनिम्बार्काचार्य)

‘जीवेश्वरमिदा चैव जडेश्वरमिदा तथा । जीवभेदो मिथश्चैव
जडजीवमिदा तथा मिथश्च जडभेदो यः प्रपञ्चो भेदपञ्चकः ॥’

(श्रीमध्वाचार्य)

मायासम्बन्धरहितं शुद्धमित्युच्यते बुधैः ।

कार्यकारणरूपं हि शुद्धं ब्रह्म न मायिकम् ॥ (शुद्धाद्वैतमार्तण्ड)

अथवा १००० रु. तक

प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि

अथवा १००० रु. तक

अथवा १००० रु. तक

अथवा १००० रु. तक

Chapter 9

THE DOCTRINES OF SHRI RAMANUJA, NIMBARKA, MADHVA AND VALLABHACHARYA

I A Comparative and critical view of Shri Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita

In many important respects the views of Shri Ramanujacharya fairly square with those of Shankara. Both believe not only in the authority of the Vedas but also in that of the other orthodox scriptures—the Upanishads, the Brahma-sutras, the Bhagavadgita, the Puranas and the smritis which are in conformity with the Vedas. As to Shankara so to Ramanuja also, Brahma is both the material and efficient cause of the world¹. Both of them, therefore, have vehemently criticized not only such Paramanuvada and Prakritivada as regard the dead atoms and the unconscious Prakriti or nature respectively to be in themselves the ultimate cause of the material world, but also the doctrine according to which God is held to be only the efficient cause, and matter to be the material cause of the world.² As in the opinion of Shankara so also in that of Ramanuja Brahma is the absolute reality. There is nothing that exists independently of it³. Whether material or mental in nature everything is entirely grounded in Brahma itself⁴. Brahma is immutable and perfect in all respects⁵, and hence the highest goal of human life⁶. Both Shankara and Ramanuja are equally strong believers in the Law of Karma⁷, and both equally believe in the interminable nature of moksha⁸, and in the efficacy of jnana to effect it. Of course, Ramanuja's inter-

1 See RBS. I. 1. 2-4; II. 1. 4-9; II. 2. 37.

2 See RBS. I. 1. 5; II. 2. 1-10; II. 2. 11-12; II. 2. 37-39.

3 Vide SDS. IV. 24.

4 Vide RBG. XIII. 2.

5 Vide RBG. Intro.; RBS. II. I. 30; II. 1. 14.

6 RBS. I. 1. 1.

7 RBS. II. 1. 34.

8 RBG. XIV. 2; VIII. 13; XV. 6; XVIII. 56; RBS. IV. 4, 22.

pretation of the term jnana is somewhat different from that of Shankara. Nevertheless the fact of its recognition as an indispensable means of moksha is acceptable to him. According to both of them the jivas and the world are beginningless, and so is also the ignorance of the jivas which makes them erroneously identify themselves with their bodies and senseorgans¹. As Shankara so is Ramanuja also vehemently opposed not only to the vijñānavada² and shunyavada of Buddhists but also to the arambhavada or asatkaryavada of the Nyaya-Vaisheshika school of thought³. The effect is, according to both, non-different from the cause⁴. Both are sat-karyavadins.

Thus, there are so many points in respect of which Ramanuja may rightly be said to be one with Shankara. In fact, if we keep apart Shankara's ultimate point of view and confine our attention to what he has said from the empirical stand-point, we really find more resemblance than difference between them. Nothing to say of other things, even in respect of the individual soul's empirical relation to God Ramanuja's view does not appear to be conflicting with that of Shankara. God, according to both, is for the individual souls the highest object of worship and the dispenser of the fruits of their actions to them⁵. But despite all this affinity there are some vital differences also. Let us see some of them.

To begin with Ramanuja's conception of Brahma, we find that, unlike Shankara, he makes no distinction between indeterminate (nirvishesha) and determinate (savishesha) Brahma. To him Brahma is determinate only. He is possessed of all good qualities such as perfect bliss, infinite knowledge, inconceivable powers, unlimited filial affection, kindness, valour, benevolence, brilliance, and so on.⁶ He creates, sustains and destroys the entire universe as a matter of mere sport.⁷ Ramanuja's Brahma is thus a wilful self-conscious being, a person, a personal God. He is immanent in all and yet transcends all. The entire world of conscious and unconscious and of gross and fine nature exists only in a billionth part of His greatness.⁸ This Brahma or God, according to

1 RBS. I. 1. 1 (शरीरगोचरा चाहंबुद्धिरविवर्तव), RBG. XV. 7.

2 RBS. II. 2. 28-29.

3 Ibid. II. 1. 15-18.

4 Ibid. II. 1. 14, 19, 20.

5 Ibid. II. 1. 22, 34.

6 RBS. II. 1. 37; RBG. Adhyaya I, Intro.

7 RBS. II. 1. 33; RBG. I. 25 (जगदुदयविमललील.....)

8 RBG. X. 42.

Ramanuja, is one without a second in the sense that there exists nothing outside or independent of Him. All the finite jivas and material objects exist in Him. They constitute in a way the body of their omnipresent Lord, the Brahma. Ramanuja is thus an advocate of an ultimate unity in diversity. To employ Bradley's terminology his Absolute is 'one in many', and not one bereft of all distinctions. It is one entity qualified by or possessed of two modes, Chita and Achita, the Jivas and the Prakriti¹. That is why Ramanuja's philosophy is generally known as Vishishtadvaita.

Ramanuja has denied heterogeneous and homogeneous (vijatiya and sajatiya) distinctions (bhedas) from God or Brahma, in so far as he has not recognized the existence of anything whatsoever outside Him, from which He could be distinguished; but so far as internal distinctions (svagata bhedas) in Him are concerned he finds it unreasonable to deny them. As to the Upanishadic denial of attributes or characters of Brahma Ramanuja has maintained that it pertains to the denial of bad qualities only.² According to him there are two states of Brahma, one the causal state and the other the effect-state³. In the former state the world consisting of the conscious and unconscious objects exists in Him in an unmanifested form, while in the latter these constituents of the world, the individual souls and the matter, take up manifest forms of different embodied souls and gross objects respectively. In the opinion of Shri Ramanuja, the negatively worded assertions of the orthodox scriptures, in which God is held to be bereft of the world and its objects and to be unapproachable through thought, etc., truly refer to the causal or unmanifested form of Brahma.⁴

The distinction between the views of Shankara and Ramanuja pertaining to Brahma may be briefly stated as follows .—

While with Shankara Brahma in itself is devoid of all distinctions, homogeneous, heterogeneous and internal alike, Ramanuja, while admitting the absence of the former two distinctions, is not prepared to see eye to eye with him with regard to the negation of internal distinctions in

1 RBS. I. 1. 1 (प्रकारद्वयविशिष्टैकवस्तु.....)

2 SDS. IV. 29; RBG. XIII. 2; RBS. I. 1. 1 (निगुणवादाश्च.....

हेयगुणासम्बन्धादुपपद्यन्ते)

3 RBG. XIII. 2 (कार्यावस्थः कारणावस्थश्च.....)

4 See RBS. I. 1. 1 and II. 1. 15.

Brahma. While Shankara has taken those Upanishadic texts which speak of Brahma as being characterless and indeterminate to be literally true and to be representing the highest truth or the Ultimate Reality, and has, accordingly, viewed their assertions about the qualified Brahma as holding good from the lower or empirical stand-point only, Ramanuja has made no distinction between the ultimate and lower points of view. For him God which Shankara has viewed as Lower Brahma (i. e. Brahma as conceived from our empirical stand-point) is the only Brahma. His is indeed an attempt "to unite personal theism with the philosophy of the Absolute."¹

The Upanishads, as we have seen, have propounded the monistic view of reality, and so in holding fast to it Ramanuja is quite faithful to them. But the belief in a personal God is so strong with him that he cannot bear the idea of viewing the ultimate Reality as impersonal and unqualified, though in doing so he forgets that his genuine fidelity to the Upanishads ultimately requires the great sacrifice of a personal God as well. The Upanishads at places, as we have seen, do speak of a characterless and distinctionless impersonal Reality. And in view of the texts which so speak of it Ramanuja certainly does not seem to be justified in reading his Vishishtadvaita (qualified monism) in them, and in retaining the individual souls and matter as ultimate facts forming an integral part of the immutable and characterless Reality, viz., Brahma. Ramanuja's recognition of real internal differences within Brahma may, no doubt, appeal more than Shankara's denial of them to us who cannot think in terms of perfect homogeneity; but it is certainly inconsistent with the Upanishadic denial of all duality and distinctions from the ultimate point of view.

Then, Shri Ramanuja has maintained that God in His essence (svarup.) remains unchanged or unaffected despite all the changes that take place in the universe which is in God Himself.² In the words of Swami Anantacharya, the head of the Kanchi-matha, "When Karana-Brahma (Brahma in causal state) becomes Karya-Brahma (Brahma in effect state) the material matrix of the world, viz., Prakriti, gets altogether transformed and so does the jnana-nature of the individual souls, although in their essence they do not undergo change; there occurs no change whatsoever in the nature of God."³ But this position is obviously

1 Hiriyanna : Outlines of Indian Phil., p. 383.

2 Vide RBS. II. 1. 14.

3 Vedantanka of Kalyana, p. 29 (Eng. Trans. ours).

very weak. It is unintelligible how Brahma can be said to remain immutable or unchanged if things subject to change are viewed as forming an integral part of it. If God is of perfectly immutable nature, the changing world consisting of names and forms, cannot be maintained to be really integral to Him; and if the world of essentially changing nature is sought to be retained as internal and integral to God, the view of His immutability gets virtually compromised. The world of real changes cannot be a real attribute of the really changeless God or Brahma.

If all souls or spirits and matter have their being in and through one omnipresent entity, viz., God or Brahma, it does not seem to be sound to view their differences as ultimate or essential. And in case these distinctions are held to be final and fundamental the entities concerned shall have to be granted the status of separate existents, and this would virtually mean to give up non-dualism or monism which Shri Ramanujacharya is not prepared to do. He is willing neither to grant independent existence to all his ultimate entities nor to recognize any real identity between them.¹

According to Ramanuja the difference between God and the individual souls is perfectly real and ultimate. Though he has admitted that the individual spirits are, like Brahma, really conscious entities which are also essentially of the nature of bliss, yet he has maintained that they are atomic in size², and really distinct from the ubiquitous Brahma which is their Lord and object of worship.³ The Upanishadic assertions, such as 'Ayamatma Brahma', mean to Ramanuja only similarity between the nature of Brahma and the individual soul (jnanaikakarataya Brahma-prakara-rata) and not one's identity with the other. The words 'that' and 'thou' in the assertion 'that thou art', Ramanuja would say, stand for God Himself, the former for God in His capacity of being an all-powerful Lord of all, and the latter for Him as being present in all human beings and as qualified by them. According to him, the identity propounded in the Upanishadic texts is the identity of one and the same differently qualified entity (vishishatasyaikyam)⁴, an identity of two forms of the self-same God. He cannot acquiesce in the view that the individual souls of limited powers and knowledge⁵ can ever be identical with the omniscient

1 SDS. IV. 19.

2 RBG. II. 17 (निरतिशयसूक्ष्म); SDS. IV. 32 (अणुः.....जीवः)
also IV. 33, 34.

3 RBS. II. 1. 22.

4 See RBS. I, 1, 1.

5 RBG. XV, 7 (अतिसंकुचितज्ञानैश्वर्यः)

and omnipotent Lord of such a vast and inconceivable universe. The souls, constituting as they do only an infinitesimal part of the infinite God, can under no circumstance be identical with Him. If the Upanishads speak of them as being all-pervasive, it is not, Ramanuja would say, in the sense of their being literally all-pervasive, but only in the sense of their being of extremely subtle (ati sukshma) nature by virtue of which it is possible for them to enter into the innermost apartments of all unconscious matter and material objects.¹

A soul is simple and subtle in nature. If it were something composite (made of parts) and of medium size, it would be subject to disintegration and consequent destruction like all other such objects; but this would give rise to a very serious objection on moral grounds, viz., the destruction of one's deeds without bearing their fruits and also the accruing of such fruits to one as are not the fruits of one's own previously performed actions.² The soul is, therefore, held to be eternal.³ It was never created and will never be destroyed.⁴ Eternality is its very nature.⁵ Creation and destruction and all other characteristics of the material body do not belong to it, for it is eternal and changeless.⁶ These beginningless and endless souls though finite in form are said to be infinite in number, firstly to vindicate the authority of those scriptural texts which apparently speak of many conscious beings, and secondly to account for such facts as birth and death, pain and pleasure, bondage and liberation, etc., of different individuals.⁷ Their difference from God as well as from one another is real.⁸ They are both doers and enjoyers (karta bhokta). Their own deeds are the causes of their bondage.⁹ It is in order to enable them to experience the fruits of their beginningless actions (karma-phala bhogartha) that gross bodies are given to them by their omnipotent and omniscient Lord.¹⁰

Unlike that of the souls of Nyaya-Vaisheshika school the consciousness of Ramanuja's souls is not the result of their contact with manas

1 RBG. II. 17; RBS. I. 1. 1.

2 SDS. IV. 34.

3 RBG. II. 18 (अनुपचयात्मकत्वात्आत्मा नित्यः)

4 Ibid. II. 11 (न जन्माधीनन मरणाधीन.....)

5 Ibid. II. 15 (आत्मनां नित्यत्वंस्वाभाविकं)

6 Ibid. II. 19 (नित्यत्वादपरिणामित्वादात्मनो जन्ममरणादयः सर्वेऽप्य.....न सन्ति)

7 SDS. IV. 33.

8 RBG. II. 12 (भगवतः सर्वेश्वरात् आत्मनां परस्परं च भेदः पारमार्थिकः)

9 Ibid. II. 14.

10 Ibid. II. 18; II. 13.

(mind); but belongs to them by their very nature, and does not require any external agency for its manifestation. They are intrinsically and essentially of the nature of consciousness and possess unlimited knowledge, which during their mundane existence, remains hidden from them due to the effect of their karmas.¹ According to Ramanuja, not only sentience but also bliss constitutes the essential nature of the self.² But its bliss, as much as its infinite intelligence, remains in a state of more or less obscurity and contraction as a result of its own karmas which are beginningless and of the nature of ignorance (avidya).³

Here it may be noted that Ramanuja who has criticized Shankara's view, according to which avidya or ignorance is said to be the cause of our bondage, has himself admitted beginningless avidya or ignorance in the form of one's karmas as being the cause of one's bondage in this world. Just as according to Shankara the superimposition of one's self on one's body, etc., is a glaring instance of one's natural or beginningless ignorance, so also Ramanuja regards the identification of one's self with body as a case of ignorance⁴, and opines that the knowledge of one's self as a distinct and separate entity from body is a necessary condition of the performance of one's duties⁵, which are in turn essential for the termination of one's bondage.⁶ The persons who extricate themselves from this ignorance come to exist in their own true nature.⁷

Although the feeling of egohood when projected on the body, etc., is viewed by Ramanuja as something erroneous, yet it is said to be an essential feature of the very nature of the souls. A soul, according to him, is that entity which is indicated by the personal pronoun 'I'; and the consciousness or feeling of one's self or soul as 'I' has been maintained by him to remain in a manifest form even in the state of liberation.⁸ Ramanuja, however, agrees with Shankara in holding that the self or soul cannot be known as an object of knowledge, but only as a subject of it.⁹ For

1 SDS. p. 107; RBG. XV. 7.

2 Vide RBG. II. 59 (आत्मस्वरूपं विषयेभ्यः परं सुखतरं.....)

3 RBG. XV. 7 (अनादिकर्मरूपाविद्यावेष्टनतिरोहितस्वरूप.....)

4 RBS. I. 1. 1 (शरीरगोचरा चाहंबुद्धिरविद्यैव)

5 RBG. II. 10 (देहातिरिक्तात्मज्ञाननिमित्तं च धर्मं)

6 Ibid. II. 13 (बन्धनिवृत्तये.....अनभिसंहितफलं कर्म.....)

7 Ibid. XV. 7 (अस्या अविद्याया मुक्तः स्वेन रूपेण अवतिष्ठते)

8 RBS. I. 1. 1 (स्वरूपेणैव अहमर्थः आत्मा मुक्तावपि अहमर्थः प्रकाशते.....)

9 RBG. II. 18 (न हि आत्मा प्रमेयतथोपलभ्यते अपितु प्रमातृतया)

Ramanuja, as for Shankara, all knowledge provides a proof of the existence of the soul or self as different from the body, for in all cases of knowledge in the form 'I know this' the self is obtained as the invariable subject thereof.¹

The nature of knowledge, however, is peculiar to Ramanuja. "To the well-known distinction between spirit and matter which are respectively termed chetana and jada in Sanskrita, he adds another which is neither. Jnana is of this intermediate type. It is unlike material entities in that it can unaided manifest itself and other objects neither of which is possible for them. But what it thus manifests is never for itself but always for another. That is, it can only show but cannot know. In this latter respect it is unlike spirit, which knows though it is unable, according to the doctrine, to show anything but itself."² Knowledge is, thus, taken by Ramanuja to be a special quality of the soul or self (atmano dharmavishesha). It is, according to him, never possible without a soul for its support and without an object to engender it.³

No doubt, on the empirical level this triple distinction (triputi) of knowledge, knower and known, would also be acceptable to Shankara; but for him it does not exist in the ultimate Reality or Brahma as such. Our true Self, according to him, is not a support of knowledge, but knowledge itself in which the distinction between the knower and the known does not exist. It is really a nirvishesha entity which shines in its own luminosity. But Ramanuja holds that knowledge by itself is never possible and that an unqualified object can never be known. "It is not only at the primal stage of perception that the unqualified object (nirvisheshavastu) is not known; all jnana, including that of the ultimate reality, is necessarily of an object as complex (saguna)."⁴ Here Ramanuja radically differs from Shankara who holds Brahma to be nirguna and nirvishesha and at the same time to be of the nature of pure knowledge.

Knowledge is really a presupposition of all distinctions, including the one between the knower and the known. To make it therefore the quality of anything whatsoever, whether it be the objects known or the

1 RBG. II. 18 (सर्वत्र देहे 'अहमिदं जानामि' इति देहादन्यस्य प्रमातृतया एकरूपेणोपलब्धेः)

2 Outlines of Indian Phil., p. p. 387-88.

3 RBS. I. 1. 1 (निराश्रया निर्विषया वा न संभवति)

4 Hiriyanna: Outlines of Indian Phil., p. 387.

mind or soul knowing them, is to miss its foundational character.¹ "The misapplication of the categories of substance and cause to the conscious principle, which is encouraged alike by the grammatical forms of language and the popular modes of thinking, is", as Prof. Mukerji has maintained, "one of those philosophical superstitions that win popular approval at the sacrifice of logical-profundity by following the natural inclinations of ordinary thought and speech."²

Moreover, to posit jnana or attributive (Dharmabhuta) jnana, as Ramanuja calls it, as an entity distinct from the souls which are said to be essentially of sentient nature, does not seem to be a logical necessity. As Prof. Hiriyanna has rightly pointed out, it is "difficult to see the reason for postulating two kinds of jnana"³—one which constitutes the essential nature of the sentient souls and the other which remains more or less contracted as long as a soul is in bondage, and becomes all-pervasive in the state of liberation and enables the liberated souls to acquire omniscience like that of God. If the expansion and contraction of one's knowledge and sentiency can be explained through the more or less sattvika nature of one's mind, where lies the necessity of multiplying entities ? Either there is no need of postulating an entity like dharmabhuta jnana, or, if it is postulated, there seems to be no sound reason to subordinate it, capable as it is of becoming all-pervasive, to an atomic soul, which is destined ever to remain atomic only. Moreover, the assertion of its contraction and expansion for the souls in bondage along with its all-pervasiveness in the case of liberated souls is also beyond our comprehension. If it is one and the same jnana, how can its all-pervasiveness and contractions and expansions be reconciled with each other, unless the contractions and expansions be held to be apparent only; but this is what Ramanuja and his followers would not admit. And if it be said that there are as many dharmabhuta jnanas as there are souls, it becomes unintelligible how a plurality of all—pervading things of exactly the same nature is possible.

Another feature of knowledge which is rather peculiar to Acharya Ramanuja's conception of it is that of its universal validity. He holds all knowledge to be true (yathartham sarvavijnanam)⁴; and this implies a flat denial of illusory objects. Accordingly he has maintained that no unreal thing is ever perceived. Even in the case of the so-called illusions

1 Vide 'The Nature of Self', p. 139.

2 Ibid. p. 138.

3 Outlines of Indian Phil., p. 389.

4 RBS. I. 1. 1

it is, according to him, truly speaking, something real itself that is the genuine object of our perception. For example, when a person perceives a conch-shell as silver, it is really, he would say, those very ingredients of silver which are present in conch-shell that are perceived. No doubt, reality may be said to be the ultimate subject of all logical judgements and as such to be the ground and support of all our knowledge, true and false alike; but on that account we cannot wipe out the very distinction between our true and illusory percepts. And so long as this distinction continues to be made it is certainly to contradict our common experience of it to hold that all knowledge is true. Shankara's view of the distinction between pratibhasika, vyavaharika and paramarthika satt, as implying a corresponding distinction in our knowledge thereof, is, therefore, certainly more sound than that of Ramanuja who, nothing to say of making the finer distinction between vyavaharika and paramarthika knowledge, does not duly appreciate the distinction between illusory and true percepts. There may be some similarity between one object and another; but that does not mean that the one is present in the other. In the words of Dr. Sinha, "Similarity means similarity in qualities. It does not necessarily mean partial co-existence of two things in each other."¹ For instance, one may hold silver to be, in some measure, similar to conch-shell; but that is not the same as to hold, like Ramanuja, that the former is present, partially though it may be, in the latter.

Thus, we find both resemblance and difference between the views of these two great orthodox thinkers. And we feel no hesitation in saying that wherever they differ the scriptural texts and logic seem to be on the side of Shankara rather than on that of Ramanuja. The scriptures, we have seen, have emphatically denied in a number of passages all duality and distinctions; but Ramanuja, we find, is not really prepared to deny even one of them. His unfaithfulness to the scriptures and to sound logic alike is no-where more pronounced than in respect of retaining the difference even of a liberated soul from his Brahma or God. The liberated souls, he believes, attain close communion with God and enjoy the satisfaction of all their desires in his close company.² Their essentially infinite sentience and bliss which remained more or less obscured throughout their innumerable cycles of so-called births and deaths get manifested there to their fullest extent.³ All the same they are said to retain their

1 Indian Psychology : Perception, p. 304.

2 SDS. IV. 43 (quoted from Pancharatrarahasya)

3 Ibid. IV. 42.

sense of egohood¹, and so their separateness and distinction from Brahma for ever. They attain only Brahmaprakarata or similarity to Brahma but not identity with Brahma.

But such a view is definitely against so many scriptural texts which have unambiguously affirmed the identity of the true Self of a person with the universal Self, the Brahma. Moreover, it is unintelligible how a self or soul which is, like God, infinitely sentient and blissful in its essential nature, eternal and beginningless, can really be different from Him.

To maintain, as Ramanuja does, that the souls are atomic in size and bereft of the power of creation, etc., whereas God is ubiquitous and possessed of all wonderful powers does not save the situation; but, on the other hand, creates so many other difficulties. In the first place, it is inconceivable how a soul which is atomic in size can be infinite in its sentience and bliss. The Chhandogya Upanishad has explicitly said that the Absolute (bhūma) alone can be really blissful and immortal and that whatever is small is mortal and devoid of real happiness. Secondly, to view a soul as atomic is not only to locate it in space and hence to view it as something material, but also to retain space in the being of Brahma itself, which would mean not only to contradict so many scriptural texts which describe it as pure consciousness and as being devoid of all internality and externality alike, but also to ignore our experience of distinction between the nature of material objects which exist in space and that of consciousness which does not exist in it. When even a material drop of water on being cast into a reservoir of it loses its separate identity and gets fully merged into the whole of its own nature, is it not inconceivable that a soul of essentially the same nature as Brahma is, will retain its identity when it is in Brahma, and Brahmā in it ? Have not the Upanishads employed the analogy of pure water cast into pure water in order to bring home to us our ultimate relation of identity with Brahma, and have they not said that the knower of Brahma becomes Brahma and that he who makes the slightest difference between himself and Brahma comes to fear ? What would Ramanuja say of such texts as emphatically and unequivocally maintain that one who knows 'I am different and he (my god) is different is like an animal unto his gods' ? We may view the space inside a jar as something different from the ubiquitous space, but the moment the jar is broken to pieces, the same space can no longer be viewed as being diffe-

1 RBS. I. 1. 1.

rent from the latter in any way whatsoever. Cannot the same thing be said of a soul which in its essential nature is similar to Brahma but erroneously identifies itself with its body and other adjuncts ?

The souls, along with Prakriti, are spoken of, by Ramanuja, as constituting the body of the omniscient and omnipotent Brahma. His conception of an organic unity is, no doubt, highly commendable; but it baffles all our efforts to understand how the souls can form the body of God who is essentially of the same nature as the souls are. We may appreciate the idea of Prakriti as constituting the body of a spiritual substance or the idea of a subtler or finer substance residing within a relatively gross substance, on the analogy of our own body and that of the all-pervading ether respectively. But the idea of spirit within spirit like the idea of ether within ether is beyond all our comprehension. If the souls are really so simple and subtle in nature as they are believed by Ramanuja to be, nothing, we should believe, can penetrate into them; and if God-substance penetrates into the soul-substance, the latter must be subject to disintegration and hence to consequent destruction as well. But this is what Ramanuja himself would not accept, for he believes the souls to be indestructible and eternal.

Ramanuja's notion of the relation of part and whole between the individual souls and God is also beset with similar difficulties. If the former are literally taken as forming parts of the latter, the integrity and indestructibility of the latter can by no means be maintained. To be composed of parts and to be indestructible is to be something inconceivable. Shankara seems to be perfectly right when he says that if we conceive God to be composed of parts he becomes destructible.¹ If the indestructibility of God is sought to be saved, it can at best be done by taking the notion of part-and-whole relation only figuratively. And that is what Shankara has actually done when he has maintained that the souls are not parts, but like parts, of God, just like the space inside a pot which appears to be a part of the ubiquitous space but in fact is not so.² But if Ramanuja agrees to this figurative sense of his part-and-whole relation, the reality of his distinction between the souls and God falls to the ground. Ramanuja is thus placed on the horns of a dilemma. If the souls are real parts of God, His Godhood is virtually affected and He gets subjected to destruction; and in case God has no real parts within Himself, it cannot be maintained that the souls are His real parts. Ramanuja,

1 SBG. XV. 7.

2 Ibid. XV. 7.

it appears, is himself conscious of this difficulty involved in his view of the part-and-whole relation. So, at places, he has had recourse to the relation of a ruler and his subjects or to that of a substantive and its attributes (*visheshya* and *visheshana*). But all these relations are essentially different from one another. As to which of them should be taken as the correct one, Ramanuja has, in fact, told us nothing. It has been entirely left to us to see for ourselves the comparative worth of their claims to be true. But unfortunately the notions of the latter two relations also are found to be as unsatisfactory as those of the former ones.

With regard to the relation of a substantive and its qualifying characters we may reasonably ask : Are the individual souls and the unconscious objects essential or accidental attributes of God ? If they are of the former sort they will constitute His very nature, for He will never exist without them; but, then, it will not be unobjectionable to say that God's essential nature consists in pure consciousness and bliss, etc., in so far as, on the assumption made, all the imperfections, joys and sorrows, diseases and distortions, which characterize the world of finite souls and unconscious entities, will equally belong to God's or Brahma's essential nature as well. And in case the so-called attributes of Brahma are viewed as accidental only, Brahma will, then, be capable of existing even without them, and so they will not really be His attributes. In any way, the conception of the relation of *visheshya* and *visheshana* seems to be far from being a satisfactory one. And the same, it may be urged, is the case with the relation of the ruler and the ruled. For, if Brahma is said to rule the souls, etc., from outside them, He will neither be infinite and ubiquitous nor an *antaryamin* (inner ruler), as He is by Ramanuja believed to be; and if He is said to rule them from within, the simplicity and partlessness of souls will have to go. But then the souls, as we have seen before, cannot be held as being immortal and eternal. In either case Ramanuja's conception of this relation too seems to be as detrimental to his fundamental position as his conceptions of other relations are.

Indian thinkers have generally tried to understand the relation between the finite souls and the infinite Brahma in terms of identity and difference. Shankara, as we have seen, is a propounder of the ultimate identity between them, while Madhva and Nimbarka, as we shall shortly see, are explicit advocates of the relation of difference and identity-in-difference respectively. But it seems to be very difficult to say which of these relations has been appropriated by Ramanuja. Nothing to say of an ordinary reader of his works even a great scholar like Madhavacharya

has been led to believe that in his philosophy are incorporated the three mutually inconsistent views of difference, etc. (i e., difference, identity and identity-in-difference).¹

When Ramanuja takes up his pen against Shankara he appears to be a bonafide propounder of dvaita or difference philosophy.² But when he is out to interpret the monistic assertions of the scriptures, he gives his reader a definite impression that he is an advocate of the relation of identity.³ On other occasions, however, Ramanuja also seems to be clearly pleading the cause of the relation of identity-in-difference. For instance, in his commentary on Brahma-sutra, II. 3. 42, he definitely seems to be an advocate of it. As Professors Chatterji and Datta have rightly said, the ".....extremely puzzling statements of Ramanuja regarding his attitude to identity, difference, and identity-in-difference tempt some writers to avoid the attempt to bring his view under any of these usual categories of relation; and lead them to hold that Ramanuja's conception of the relation between self and God is a category by itself; it is inseparability (aprithaksthiti), But this is merely giving up the game of logical understanding. For, inseparability of existence is itself a vague relation, admitting of various formulations. Even Shankara's conception of the relation between the effect and cause (ananyatva) can come under this. Besides, logical thought is not silenced by the new-fangled name; it requires to understand what this relation means in terms of identity and difference; or, failing this, why this relation defies such affiliation".⁴

To the relations of difference and identity-in-difference between God and the Souls and world we shall shortly return when we take up the philosophical doctrines of Madhva and Nimbarka respectively. What we should note here is the fact that the wavering attitude of Shri Ramanuja towards these relations is a sufficient indication of the difficulty involved in such a view of God and Souls as has been propounded in his Vishishtadvaita. It points to the struggle that seems to be going on in his mind to synthesize "the ultimate of philosophy with the ultimate of religion".⁵ It was in all probability due to Ramanuja's

1 SDS. V. 1 (परस्परविरुद्धभेदादिपक्षत्रय.....)

2 RBG. XIII. 2; II. 12 [भगवतः.....आत्मनां.....भेदः पारमार्थिकः];
RBS. II. 1. 22; I. 1. 1.

3 RBG. XIII. 2; RBS. II. 1. 15; See also SDS. IV. 27.

4 Intro. Indian Phil., p. 430.

5 Outlines of Indian Phil., p. 408.

attempts at such a synthesis that a number of discrepancies crept into his system. In the words of Prof. Hirianna, "The theistic creed that finds place in the present synthesis had, as the result of its long history, developed a host of concrete details, not all of which for lack of adequate rational support could fuse with philosophy. The philosophic doctrine included in it was, on the other hand, the result of one of the most daring speculations in the whole field of thought; and its conception of Reality was the least personal. Hence there are some discrepancies in the doctrine resulting from the synthesis",¹

II The Bhedabhedavada of Shri Nimbarkacharya

The term 'bhedabhedavada' literally means a doctrine or philosophy of difference and non-difference, or of non-difference in difference. In a sense, Ramanuja, whose philosophical views we have already seen, may be said to be a subscriber to the doctrine of difference and non-difference, for his jivas and world are both different and non-different from his God or Brahma. But in so far as he has emphasized their unity aspect to which their difference has definitely been subordinated, his philosophical doctrine has got to be distinguished from another similar doctrine which has attached equal importance to both difference and non-difference and has subordinated neither to the other. It is this doctrine which in contradistinction from Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita is known as 'bhedabhedavada' or 'dvaitadvaita'. According to it both identity and difference, unity as well as diversity, are equally real and significant facts.

The most widely known advocate of 'bhedabhedavada' is Shri Nimbarkacharya who is generally believed to have lived shortly after Ramanuja.² But in point of fact this doctrine is certainly prior even to Shankara³ who has himself definitely referred to it in his commentary on Brahma-sutras, III. 2. 27 and 28. From this it is clear that there must have been some propounder or propounders of bhedabhedavada even before Shankara's time. Moreover, Shri Bhaskaracharya also, who is believed to have been either a contemporary of Shankara or to have lived just after his time, has so interpreted the sutras 27 and 28 of Adhyaya III, pada II, as to represent the point of view of an advocate of bheda-bhedavada. In the opinion of Dr. Dasgupta, Upavarsha (Bodhayana)

1 Outlines of Indian Phil., p. 408. 2 Vide AHIP. Vol. II, p. 702.

3 Dr. DasGupta : HIP. Vol. II, p. 43; Indian Idealism, p. 160.

to whom Shankara has referred in his commentary on Brhma-sutras (I. 1. 9; I. 1. 23; I. 2. 2¹ and III. 3. 53), and Bhartriprapancha, to whom reference has been made by Shankara in his commentary on the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, "held some form of bhedabheda doctrine".¹ This shows that bhedabhedavada must have been known much before Nimbarka's time. Anyway, this doctrine is generally associated with his name, and, in fact, it is in his works that it is now available in its earliest clear-cut form.

In many of its important details Nimbarka's bhedabhedavada or dvaitadvaita is strikingly similar to Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita. Apart from some finer differences here and there his conceptions of God, Jiva and the world are more or less like those of Ramanuja. For example, God or Brahma, according to both of them, is possessed of innumerable good qualities and is both the material and efficient cause of the world, as well as the dispenser of the fruits of the individual souls' good and bad actions. Both hold the individual souls to be of atomic size and of the nature of bliss and wisdom. They are many in number, and agents and enjoyers both, and, unlike those of God, their powers are limited. Similarly there is hardly any difference between their conceptions of prakriti which are strikingly similar to the Samkhya conception of it except that according to Samkhya Prakriti is an independent entity and has the three gunas for its constituents; while according to Ramanuja and Nimbarka it is not an independent entity but something dependent on God and closely associated with Him, and has the three gunas as its attributes, and not as its constituents. Both Ramanuja and Nimbarka have granted almost an independent status to Kala or time and have posited an aprakrita substance which is of the nature of shuddhasattva or pure matter and, as such, different from trigunatmika prakriti and time both. It is called a Nitya-vibhuti of God and by various other names, such as Vishnu-pada, Parama-vyoma, Parama-pada, Brahma-loka, etc.² The most fundamental difference between Ramanuja and Nimbarka lies in their views about the relation of God on the one hand and the world and the individual souls on the other. While Ramanuja seems to waver in his mind with regard to this relation and calls it aprithaksthiti (inseparability), Nimbarka has explicitly asserted that it is a relation of identity and difference or identity-in-difference, which means that God

1 HIP. Vol. II, p. 43.

2 Vide Vedanta-kaustubha, I. 1. 1 and SDS. IV. 32.

is both different and non-different from the jivas and the world alike.¹ And it is only this aspect of Nimbarka's philosophy which we propose to consider here.

Like Shankara and Ramanuja, Nimbarka is a sat-karya-vadin. According to him, as according to other sat-karyavadins, an effect pre-exists in its cause.² It is not something entirely new, but only an unfoldment of the cause itself.³ If it is a previously non-existent something which gets produced, why are, then, Nimbarka would ask, the sprouts of barley, etc., not produced from fire ?⁴ As an effect is obtained only when its cause is there, it is, Nimbarka says, non-different from its cause.⁵ But in so far as it is an effect and has, as such, its own nature and attributes different from those of its cause, it is also different from the cause. An effect, therefore, according to Nimbarka, is both different and non-different from its cause. So the world with all its objects, concrete as well as non-concrete in forms, stands in the relation of difference and non-difference to Brahma or God, which is its cause.⁶ As we have said before, Brahma, according to Nimbarka, is both the material and efficient cause of the world. "He is the material cause, since creation means the manifestation of his powers (shakti) of chit and achit in their subtle forms. He is the efficient cause of the universe, since He brings about the union of the individual souls with their respective karmas and their results and the proper instruments for experiencing them."⁷ Just as a snake in the form of a rope is the cause of its coil, so also Brahma which is possessed of all powers is both the efficient and material cause of the world, which as an effect, consisting of concrete and non-concrete things, etc., is just like the coiled form of the snake. As the coil of a snake is something dependent, pervaded and an effect, and the snake, in comparison with its coil, independent, pervader and cause, there is difference between

1 NBS. I. 1. 4 (सर्वभिन्नाभिन्न)

2 Ibid. II. 1. 16 (कार्यस्य कारणे सत्त्वात्)

3 Ibid. II. 1. 17 and Vedanta-Kaustubha on it (अभिव्यक्तनामरूपत्व व्यपदिश्यते)

4 Vide NBS. II. 1. 17 (यद्यसदेव कार्यमुत्पद्यते, तर्हि बन्धेयं वाद्यङ्कुरोत्पत्तिः कुतो नास्ति)

5 Ibid. II. 1. 15 (तदनन्यत्वं कारणसद्भावे कार्योपलब्धेः)

6 Ibid. III. 2. 27 (मूर्तामूर्तादिकं विश्वं ब्रह्मणि स्वकारणे भिन्नाभिन्नसम्बन्धेन स्थातुमर्हति)

7 IP., Vol. II. p. 753; also Vedanta-kaustubha, I. 1. 2

(जगदभिन्ननिमित्तोपादानत्वे सति उपादानत्वं निमित्तत्वम्)

them. And in so far as the existence and origin of the coil are not possible without or independently of the snake it is non-different from the latter. Similarly, the world which is an effect of Brahma possessed of chit and achit powers is naturally different and non-different from its cause, the Brahma.¹

Just as between the world and Brahma there is said to be the relation of difference and non-difference, so also between the individual souls and Brahma called Purushottama the same relation of difference and non-difference has been held to be true.² Just as light is by its very nature different as well as non-different from its substratum, for the former does not exist independently of the latter and because both are fire, so also a soul which is a part (of Brahma) is by its very nature both different and non-different from that of which it is a part (viz., Brahma).³ "Some scriptural passages refer to the highest Self and the individual soul as distinct entities, cp. e. g. Mu. Up. III, 1, 8, 'Then he sees him meditating on him as without parts', where the highest Self appears as the object of the soul's vision and meditation; Mu. Up. III, 2, 8, 'He goes to the divine Person who is greater than the great;' and Bri. Up. III, 7, 15, 'Who rules all beings within;' in which passages the highest Self is represented as the object of approach and as the ruler of the individual soul. In other places again the two are spoken of as non-different, so e. g. Kh. Up. VI, 8, 7, 'Thou art that;' Bri. Up. I, 4, 10 'I am Brahman;' Bri. Up. III, 4, 1, 'This is thy Self who is within all;' Bri. Up. III. 7. 15, 'He is thy Self, the ruler within, the immortal'—As thus difference and non-difference are equally vouched for by scripture, the acceptance of absolute non-difference would render futile all those texts which speak of difference. We therefore look on the relation of the highest Self and the soul as analogous to that of the snake and its coils."⁴ It is thus mainly to reconcile the texts of apparently contrary import that Nimbarka and his followers have had recourse to propounding the relation of difference and non-difference between the individual souls and Brahma.⁵ They regard both

1 Vedanta-Kaustubha, III. 2. 27

(कुण्डलोपादानभूतो रज्ज्वाकारः अहिः कारणं.....स्वाभाविकी भेदाभेदी भवतः)

2 NBS. III. 2.28 (जीवपुरुषोत्तमयोरपि तथा सम्बन्धो ज्ञेयः)

3 Vedanta-Kaustubha, III. 2. 28 (प्रकाशस्य आश्रयेण सह स्वाभाविकी भेदाभेदी...
...तद्वदंशभूतस्य जीवस्यांशिना सह.....भेदाभेदी)

4 SBS. III. 2. 27 (Thibaut's Trans.).

5 Vedanta-Kaustubha, III. 2. 28 (उभयश्रुतिविरोधपरिहाराय.....)

the types of scriptural assertions as being equally authoritative.¹ and hence they have deemed it to be desirable to retain both the difference and non-difference between Brahma and jiva, at one and the same time. For example, Shri Nimbarkacharya would say, 'when the scriptures assert that there are two unborn (spirits), one knowing and ruling (all) and the other ignorant and ruled or dependent, they propound difference between the omniscient and omnipotent Lord and the individual souls; but the self-same scriptures speak of also non-difference between them by means of such assertions as 'That thou art' (Tattvamasi), etc.'²

It is not only with regard to the cause and effect, Brahma and the world, and Brahma and the individual souls, but also with regard to substance and attributes that the relation of difference-non-difference has been held to subsist. Knowledge which is viewed as an attribute or quality of soul and also as something constituting its nature, is said to be different as well as non-different from it. In the words of Dr. Sinha, "The relation of the soul to knowledge is that of the qualified (dharmin) to its quality (dharma). There is identity-in-difference between them. The soul and knowledge, though non-distinct from each other, are related to each other as substance and attribute."³ "Between the qualification and the qualified there is no absolute identity, but only the non-perception of difference."⁴

III A critical estimate of Bhedabhedavada from Shankara's point of view

According to Shankara difference and non-difference are not equally real. Of course, from the empirical point of view the difference is there; but what is ultimately real is the non-difference only. He does not agree with the bhedabhedavadins in whose opinion bheda or difference is as real as non-difference or abheda. His main argument against them is that if bheda is taken to be ultimately real, and the relation of an individual soul to Brahma is explained on the analogy of a snake and its coils or on that of light and its substratum, the liberation of the individual soul would become impossible. For, whichever of the two analogies advanced to support the relation of difference and

1 Ibid. II. 3. 42. (उभयविधिवाक्यानां तुल्यबलत्वात्.....)

2 NBS. II. 3. 42 ('ज्ञाज्ञौ द्वावजावीशानीशावि' त्यादि भेदव्यपदेशात्, 'तत्त्वमसी' त्याद्यभेदव्यपदेशात्)

3 AHIP, Vol. II. p. 70,5

4 IP., Vol. II. p. 752.

non-difference be taken, bondage of the soul would turn out to be quite a real fact, as real as Brahma itself, and, as such, it cannot be done away with. But such a position is antagonistic to all the scriptural texts which speak of the soul's final release. So Shankara has opined that the scriptures aim at establishing only the non-difference of the soul with Brahma, and not their difference. The texts which speak of difference simply refer to it as something known through other means of knowledge.¹

In our opinion Shankara seems to be right when he says that the object of the Upanishads is to propound ultimate identity and not difference. And this we have adequately seen in our brief account of the contents of these texts in chapter II. The Upanishads have undoubtedly held the knowledge of the absolute Reality, viz., Brahma which is without a second and beyond all sorts of limitations and qualifications whatsoever, to be the only means of one's moksha or release from bondage. The duality and distinctions have repeatedly been decried, while the vision of unity has been immensely praised. Now, in view of this it is certainly difficult to maintain that according to the Upanishads the differences are as real as the ultimate unity.

While commenting on Shankara's commentary on Brahmasutra, III. 2.29-30, Vachaspati has tried to show the untenability of the very conception of the difference-non-difference relation. Dwelling upon the analogy of the snake and its coils he has expressed his argument against the relation of difference and non-difference in the following form: Are the snake-state and the coiled-state of the snake-substance underlying them different or non different from it ? If they are different, what should really be said is this that the snake-state and the coiled-state are different, and not that there is difference and non-difference between them and their substance. A thing does not become different or non-different on account of the difference or non-difference of another thing. To think or say that it does would lead to the fault of irrelevancy or going beyond the context (atiprasanga). If the snake-state and the coiled-state do not differ from their substance (vastu), then the very difference between the objects to which the said difference and non-difference refer will vanish on account of their being non-different from (their) substance. The non-contradiction between difference and non-difference as sought to be established on the basis of its common experience can also not be maintained if their object of reference be held to be one and the same; for, when there is (really)

1 Vide SBS, III. 2. 29.

non-difference between even those things which have (apparently) different forms, where will difference subsist? Vachaspati, therefore, holds that the relation of difference and non-difference between things is not tenable.

As a matter of fact, if we respect the logical law of Contradiction, we cannot hold one and the same thing to be both different and non-different from another one-and-the-same thing at one and the same time, and in one and the same sense or respect. 'A' cannot be both 'B' and 'not-B', if 'A' and 'B' are taken strictly as 'A' and 'B' as they should be, in one and the same context. And this is what even the Bhedabheda-vadins would also, most probably, admit. Nevertheless they do propound the doctrine of 'bhedabheda'. What can, then, be the plausible explanation of their view?

If two objects, say a table and a chair, it may be suggested, cannot be both different and non-different from each other in one and the same respect, they can certainly be so in respect of their different characteristics or features. Supposing that they are both made of wood but have different colours, viz., black and white, it may be urged, they can very well be said to be simultaneously different as well as non-different from each other—different in respect of colour and non-different in respect of the material of which they are made. Of course, this interpretation of the doctrine of bhedabheda, avoiding as it does the violation of the law of Contradiction, tends to make it plausible. But, if we further subject it to strict logical analysis, we again find it to be involved in an incessant difficulty. We have supposed that the table and chair are both made of wood and that the former is black and the latter white in colour, in other words, that woodiness and blackness constitute the characteristic qualities of the table while woodiness and whiteness, those of the chair. But, then, we may be asked to say as to what sort of relation, in terms of difference and non-difference, there exists between these qualities on the one hand and the objects qualified by them on the other.

Confining the enquiry to only one of the two objects under consideration it may be asked. Are woodiness and blackness different or non-different from the table? Of course, we cannot say that they are different. For, were they really different from it, they could not belong to it. And in case they did not belong to it, the very ground of the relation of difference and non-difference between the table and the chair would disappear, for it has been in view of these qualities, viz., woodiness and blackness, that the table has been held to be in the relation of difference

and-non-difference with the chair characterized by the qualities woodiness and whiteness. Can we then say that the characteristics woodiness and blackness are non-different from (or identical with) the object table which they characterize ? Certainly not, for to say so would mean to abolish or overlook the clear-cut distinction between woodiness and blackness, in so far as each of these characteristics, when viewed as being identical with one and the same object (viz. table), will have to be maintained to be identical with the other. And the recourse to such a view will remove the very basis of the relation of bhedabheda between the objects concerned. Now, the only alternative left with us is to view the relation between the table and its characteristics as that of bheda-bheda. But that would mean an attempt to explain the relation of bhedabheda between the table and the chair by assuming that very relation between the table and its characteristics, which will be a clear case of committing the logical fallacy of *Petitio Principii*. And in case this attempt to explain the relation of bhedabheda by another relation of the same designation is continued to be made, it will obviously involve us in the logical flaw of *Regressus ad Infinitum*.

Thus, we find that the explanation of the relation of bhedabheda (difference and non-difference or identity-in-difference) is beset with great difficulties. That is probably why "the Advaitin views the relation between the Saguna Brahma and its constitutive elements as unique or *tadatmya*.....not to be characterized as identity or difference or identity-in-difference.....The Saguna Brahman includes not merely reality but also appearance, which is something less than the real. The element of reality in it is the ultimate of Advaita.....this reality is not the mere unity underlying the diversity of the universe, for unity and diversity are relative to each other, and it is impossible to retain the one as real while rejecting the other as an appearance. Both of them are alike appearances and the advaitic Ultimate is what is beyond them—their non-phenomenal ground (*nirvishesha vastu*)."¹ All relations, including the relation of identity-in-difference, presuppose a self or consciousness to make the very conception of their existence possible. This underlying conscious principle, therefore, cannot be explained in terms of these relations themselves. It must be above these relations. "That unity-in-difference", as Prof. A. C. Mukerji has observed, "is the highest form to which every conceivable object of thought must conform may be true, but this by

1 Outlines of Indian Phil., PP. 371—72.

itself does not show that subject for which such a form exists is itself a unity-in-difference; in other words, even the distinction between form and matter presupposes the subject which, therefore, cannot be identified with one of the distincts. To do so would be to contradict the principle that the self is the presupposition of all objects of thought or that all distinctions are within knowledge."¹ The relation of identity-in-difference, therefore, we may add, cannot be applicable at least to Brahma or self which is essentially of the nature of consciousness itself.

IV Shri Madhvacharya's Dvaitavada

Madhvacharya or Madhva (1199-1278 A. D.), also known as Purnaprajna and Anandatirtha, is an uncompromising advocate of the philosophy of difference (bheda) which is generally called 'dvaitavada' (a dualistic doctrine or dualism), probably because Madhva has drawn a bold line of demarcation between his two types of the ultimate reals—one svatantra (independent) and the other asvatantra (dependent). Lord Vishnu, also designated as Purushottama, Paramatma or Brahma, is his only independent reality.² Everything else is viewed as dependent on Him, and hence as being non-free in the strict sense. But strictly speaking Madhva is an advocate of pluralistic realism, as under his dependent type of reality he has propounded a number of beginningless and endless real entities. Shri (Lakshmi), the Vedic sounds, the avyakritakasha (unmanifested or uncreated space), the jivas (individual souls), the primordial matter, etc., are all held to be as eternal as Brahma Himself. All eternal, whether svatantra or asvatantra, are equally real, and so are the differences between them. The advocacy of difference constitutes, indeed, the most striking feature of Madhva's philosophy in which differences are held to be identical with all the entities of the world (Savishe-shabhinna) and each object to be unique in nature, i. e., to be different from all other objects.³ Bhedavada, therefore, would be a more appropriate epithet for this philosophy than dvaitavada.

Madhva has recognized as many as five kinds of fundamental and eternal differences in the world.⁴ They are the differences between the

1 The Nature of Self, p. 17.

2 SDS. V. 1 (द्विविधतत्त्वं स्वतन्त्रास्वतन्त्रभेदात् स्वतन्त्रो भगवान् विष्णुः)

3 Vide Vishnutattva-nirnaya (प्रायः सर्वतो विलक्षणं पदार्थस्वरूपं दृश्यते)

4 Ibid. (प्रकृष्टः पंचविधो भेदः प्रपंचः); Nyaya-Sudha, 1, 230 b

(प्रकृष्टः पंचः प्रपंचः)

jivas and Ishvara, the jivas and the material substance, the material substance and Ishvara, and the mutual differences between the different jivas as well as between the material objects themselves.¹ These differences, it is maintained, constitute a part and parcel of the very nature of the things (Dharmisvarupa). It is through them that things are distinguished from one another. That is why, it is urged by the followers of Madhva, the seeker of a cow does not move to catch hold of a 'gavaya' when he sees it.² The differences are real and not illusory, as they are known and preserved by the great Lord Himself, who, being omniscient, cannot be subject to any illusion, for an illusion is always due to the lack of definite knowledge.³ Had the world of five-fold differences been illusory, it would have been sublated, or, if it had a beginning, it should have come to an end. But it is neither sublated nor destroyed. So, with all its differences it is real and beginningless.⁴

The means of valid knowledge—perception, inference and testimony which have been generally recognized by orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, have also been accepted by Madhva and his followers, and they have all been employed to prove the reality of difference. Difference, it is said, must be real, for it is known through all the three means of valid knowledge. It is given in perception when we perceive one object as different from another, for example, the blue colour from yellow colour, etc.⁵ The knowledge of difference is obtained through inference as well. For instance, we infer that God is different from the jivas, since He is an object of worship for them, and he who is an object of worship must be different from the worshipper, just as a king is from his servants.⁶ The scriptures also, according to Madhva, bear a testimony to the reality of difference, for example, when they assert that 'the atman is real, the jiva is real and the difference is real.'⁷ In no experience of theirs and at no stage of their existence the jivas are, in the opinion of Madhva, identical with Brahma. They retain their difference from Him even in the state of liberation.⁸

As to the scriptural texts which speak of the oneness of the jivas and Brahma it is opined that "the jiva and Brahman are sometimes figuratively spoken of as one owing to their (sthanaikya) occupying the same point of space, (matyaikya) identity of interests, or their (sadrshya)

1 SDS. V. 22.

4 Ibid.

7 Ibid. V. 17.

2 Ibid. V. 6.

5 Ibid. V. 2.

8 Ibid. V. 29.

3 Ibid. V. 22.

6 Ibid. V. 10.

resemblance; in some figurative statements, again, the jiva is ignored on account of his dependence and inferiority and God is described as if He were the only existent. In some statements the jiva is figuratively described as if he were God himself to indicate the presence of God in him."¹ Thus, the scriptural assertions which speak about the identity of the jiva with Brahma are so interpreted by Madhva and his followers as to support their view of difference between them. The text 'advaitam paramarthatah', which literally and explicitly means that non-duality is the ultimate reality, has been taken to mean the absence of an equal or superior being to Vishnu who is said to be the most perfect, the best and the highest of all beings or entities.² The well-known assertion of the Chhandogya Upanishad, viz., 'Tattvamasi' (That thou art) is also taken figuratively so as to mean only some sort of resemblance between the jiva and Brahma. The word 'that', it is pointed out, always refers to a distant or out-of-sight object, while the word 'thou' has for its referent a here-and-now or directly perceived person. Therefore, it is concluded, identity of the one with the other is inconceivable.³ The independent and perfect Brahma, it is urged, can never be the same as the finite and dependent jiva.⁴ Not only this, in their anxiety to seek a scriptural justification for their hypothesis of difference between the jiva and Brahma, Madhva and his followers have also gone to the length of reading the text 'Tattvamasi' as 'atattvamasi'⁵ which reverses the entire meaning of the original text.

Madhva and his followers have, no doubt, admitted that the Upanishads do speak of 'knowing all by knowing the one', all the same they do not acquiesce in the view that the Upanishads have propounded only one ultimate reality. Say whosoever may, they are not prepared to entertain the idea that the differences which are so obvious can in any way be unreal. They argue out that if the differences, and on their account the objects which have them, were unreal, the scriptures would not have spoken of knowing all through the knowledge of the one; for the knowledge of what is unreal is not possible through the knowledge of what is real.⁶ The knowing of all by knowing one is conceivable only through the knowledge of their centrality or causality, etc.⁷ One may be said to have known all the persons of a village if one comes to know

1 The Philosophical Quarterly, July, 1944, p. 106 (Vide H. K. Vedavyasachar's article 'Is Madhva a Monist ?') See also SDS. V. 29.

2 SDS. V. 21, 23.

3 Ibid. V. 28.

4 Ibid. V. 29.

5 Ibid. V. 30.

6 Ibid. V. 35.

7 Ibid.

the chief person among them. So also by knowing the clay a person may be said to have known all the articles made of it. Similarly by knowing God or Brahma we may be said to have known all the persons and things of the world, for Brahma is the highest of all beings, and the cause of the creation, subsistence, etc., of the entire universe.¹ It should, however, be noted here that Brahma, according to Madhva, is only the efficient cause of the world, and not its material cause.² The material cause (upadanakarana) of it is said to be the Prakriti.³

As in the Vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja so also in this dvaita philosophy of Madhva Vishnu or Brahma is viewed as an abode of infinite good qualities, such as freedom, power, knowledge and bliss, etc.⁴ He is free from all evils and impurities and possesses all excellence.⁵ The scriptures, it is said, have spoken of Him as being unqualified (nirguna) not because He is devoid of even good qualities but simply because He is untouched by the qualities of Prakriti and by the vices and shortcomings of mundane existence. In fact, Brahma is not attributeless. The texts which speak of His attributelessness cannot be taken to be literally true, for they contradict so many pramanas (means of valid knowledge) which bear testimony to the reality of differences.⁶ It is perhaps to emphasize the perfect defectlessness of Brahma that Madhva has dwelt so much on His difference from the finite jivas and the world alike. "This absolute difference", as says Sri H. K. Vedavyasachar, "between the world and Brahman is posited as a logical reasoning in proof of God's defectlessness. Brahma is defectless because He is absolutely different from the world which alone is defective."⁷ As said before, difference, according to Madhva, forms an essential part of the very nature of different things. So "when we say the world and Brahman are different we mean that the world has difference from Brahman as its natural positive quality; and God has in turn difference from the world as His positive natural quality; so that even if the world were to perish it will not become identical with God as one of the two differences still persists."⁸ Identity of the world, or of the jivas, with Brahma, therefore,

1 SDS. V. 23, 40.

2 Anuvyakhyana, II. 2: 2 (ब्रह्मणो निर्विकारत्वावगमात् न जगदुपादानकारणत्वं किन्तु निमित्तत्वमेव)

3 Vide AHIP. Vol. II, p. 693,

4 SDS. V. 34.

5 SDS. V. 1; V. 43.

6 Ibid. V. 2.

7 Philosophical Quarterly, July, 1944, p. 105.

8 Ibid p. 106.

is said to be never possible. Brahma will always retain His difference from them. The controlled world or the jivas can never be the same as their inner-controller, the Brahma. To Madhva monism in any form whatsoever appears to be very obnoxious. According to him and his followers "pure monism which rejects the world as illusory involves the conception of a deluded God; pantheism makes God imperfect by identifying God with the defective world; the doctrines of identity and difference are illogical and cannot save God from imperfection resulting from the acknowledged identity."¹

Shri Madhvacharya and his followers not only hold fast to the differences between Brahma and the jivas but also speak of not only the individualistic but also classificatory differences among the jivas themselves. The jivas, according to them, are of three kinds, viz., nitya, mukta and baddha.² The 'nitya' jivas or souls are those which are, like Lakshmi, eternally free and have never been in bondage. Besides these are others which, though not eternally free, have ultimately attained freedom from bondage. They are called 'mukta' or liberated, and have among them, besides the souls of gods, fathers and seers (Rishis), the souls of the liberated beings. The 'baddha' souls are the souls in bondage. Of these some are said to be destined to remain in bondage for ever. Either hell or the circuit of samsara (world) is their perpetual poor lot. Those who are meant for hell are designated as 'tamoyogya' (fit for darkness), while those who are to be born again and again in this world are called 'nityasamsarin.' They are not at all eligible for liberation. Such is not, fortunately, the fate of all the souls in bondage. The emancipation of some of them at least is possible. Such souls are called muktiyogya (fit for liberation). They can hope for a day when through the grace of God their miserable mundane existence and transmigration will terminate and their own blissful nature will get manifested to them.³

The souls are atomic in size. All the same wisdom and bliss constitute their very nature; but they are ordinarily ignorant of it. So long as they are in bondage their true nature remains hidden from them. But on their being released their intrinsic wisdom and bliss shine forth. While according to Shankara liberation can be attained only through the knowledge of one's identity with Brahma, the liberating knowledge of Madhva is

1 Ibid. Vide Anuvyakhyana, III. 3. 1 (भेदाभेदप्यभेदेन दोषानामपि संभवः)

2 See AHIP. Vol. II. p. 698; and IP. Vol. II. p. 744.

3 Madhva Bhashya on Brahma-Sutra, I. 1. 17 (स्वस्वरूपानन्दाभिव्यक्तिः.....)

the 'knowledge of one's difference from the omniscient Lord.¹ It is the knowledge of the innumerable good qualities of God, and not the realization of one's identity with Him, that effects one's liberation.² Devotion to God, according to Madhva, is the most essential condition of one's release from bondage. Without it release from bondage is never possible.³ For, God grants the liberating knowledge to those persons alone who win His grace. And His grace can be won only through perfect devotion and surrender to Him. God's grace and devotion to Him, therefore, are as essential for liberation as knowledge itself. As expressed by Prof. Radhakrishnan, "the author of the Nyayamrita argues that he who has the vision of the truth but not the grace of God necessary to effect freedom, continues to live in the flesh.....Complete freedom can be achieved only through the grace of God."⁴ "The supreme who is non-manifested cannot be made manifested by the force of our efforts. He reveals himself when pleased with our devotion."⁵ Moksha or liberation, according to Madhva, is not the state of attaining oneness with God or Brahma. It is only a state of fellowship with or proximity to Him.⁶ What is very peculiar to Madhva's moksha is that his "released soul is liable to experience of miseries."⁷ Of course like Shankara Madhva has admitted that the state of release is an ever-lasting state, from which one does not return to mundane existence.⁸ But taken in its entirety, we can say, Madhva's Dvaitavada is poles-asunder from Shankara's Brahnavada.

V A critical estimate of Madhva's Dvaitavada

Madhva regards differences as being constitutive of the essence or essential character of different objects. But it is unintelligible how differences can enter into the essence, or constitute the character, of things. If they really did so, it should have been possible to perceive them like such other characters of things as colour, shape, size, etc. But this does not actually happen. When we perceive or know a thing its differences from other things are not likewise known by us. It does not, therefore,

1 Vide Nyaya-Sudha, 1. 230 b (प्रकृष्टः पञ्चः प्रपञ्चः । प्रकृष्टता च मोक्षांगज्ञानतया भवति ।)

2 SDS. V. 32, 28, 34.

3 Ibid. V. 27.

4 IP. Vlo. II. p. 748.

5 Ibid. (Vide Madhva Bhashya, BS. III. 2. 20-21; III. 2. 23-27).

6 SDS. V. 34 (तत्समीपे स मोदते)

7 AHIP. Vol. II. p. p 698-99.

8 SDS. V. 27 (मोक्ष एव नित्यः)

seem to be correct to regard differences as forming part of the character of things.¹ The fact that the perception or cognition of the difference of a certain object from another object depends upon the presence, physical or mental, of both the objects and not only of one of them, clearly indicates that their difference is not a character or quality of any one of them. Every particular object can be said to be different from innumerable other objects in some or the other respects, and so, on the view that difference is, like other characters, a character of things, one should be able to perceive the innumerable differences of a thing in its perception. But will it not be something absurd to speak of the actuality of such a perception ?

If difference be deemed as a real entity on the ground that it enables us to distinguish one thing or quality from another, we shall be required to posit another difference to distinguish this entity itself from other such entities, and lead this would us into an infinite series of differences.² And in case it is maintained that difference as such does not require another difference to distinguish it from other differences or entities, it would follow that difference is not an entity like other entities. The view that difference is a real entity is, indeed, beset with insurmountable difficulties. Can the differences between the so-called different articles, say, made of clay, be said to be as real as the clay itself ? Do they not come and go, while the clay continues to remain as it is ? Nothing to say of the differences between different articles of clay, even the articles, whose characters the differences are said to be, are not so real as the clay. These differences altogether disappear and cease to exist along with the articles when the latter are broken to pieces and assume the form of clay, their cause or substratum.

Difference, it can strongly be urged, is never known in and through itself. The knowledge of difference between any two or more things necessarily depends on one's prior knowledge of those things. No matter whether it is regarded as a quality of things or as something qualified by them, it is certainly not cognized independently of them. But on regarding differences as constituents of the essence or nature of things, the cognition of the latter must depend on the cognition of the former. Thus, the knowledge of difference being dependent upon the knowledge

1 Vide Khandanakhandakhadya p. p. 126.—27

(यदि च स्वरूपं भेदः स्यात्, तदा घमिणि दृष्टे स्वरूपं दृष्टमिति क्वचिन्न संदेहः स्यात्)

2 Vide Advaita-siddhi, II. 14, p. 787.

of things concerned and the knowledge of those things requiring for its possibility the knowledge of their mutual difference, the advocate of the view that differences constitute the nature of things is inevitably led to commit the fallacy of Interdependence (Anyonyashraya).

There are only three alternatives of viewing difference in its relation to the things which it differentiates from one another. It may be viewed either as different or as non-different (identical) or as being different-and non-different from them. But none of these alternatives is free from grave difficulty for its advocates to surmount. In case it is held to be different, it would need another difference to distinguish itself from that from which it is different, and this need will nowhere be satisfied and will inevitably lead us to infinite regress (Anavastha). And the same can be said to be the result if we take difference as being both different and non-different from the things it differentiates between, in so far as difference continues to be present in this view as well. Moreover, to regard one and the same thing, whether it be difference or anything else, as both different and non-different from another one and the same thing is obviously to disregard the self-evident Law of Contradiction. And, then, if difference is taken to be non-different from the things which it distinguishes from one another, it virtually gets lost in its identity with them.

The essential function of difference, it may be further added, is to disunite or disjoin the things it serves to differentiate. So if it is conceived as being constitutive of the nature of things (vastusvarupa or Dharmisvarupa), it will have, in view of its inalienable nature, to be taken as an incessant cause of the disintegration or disruption of the things concerned. And, on this view, integrated individuality and unified entity should have become conspicuous by their absence in the world, for the innumerable differences of all persons and objects from all other persons and things should have torn them to pieces by this time.

If the three means of knowledge (recognized by Shri Madhvacharya himself) give us difference, do they not give us unity, similarity and identity also? If perception, for example, enables us to distinguish blue colour from yellow colour, does it not enable us to recognize both blue and yellow colours as colour? Do the scriptures also not propound the unity or integrity of a soul and the identity of all entities with Brahma?

Can we not employ inference also to maintain our ultimate identity with Brahma by saying that things of the same nature are identical with each other in respect of that nature, and that scriptures tell us that we are essentially of the same nature as Brahma is? Moreover, we may ask :

Do all the three means of valid knowledge give us all the five differences which are here held to be eternal and real ? What perception, for instance, can we have of the difference between individual souls and matter on the one hand and God on the other ? Can we be said to perceive the difference between one soul and another ? When a soul itself is not an object of perception, how can its difference from another soul be said to be so ? And the same thing can be said about the difference of a soul from a material object.

"The fact of knowledge", as Prof. Radhakrishnan has rightly remarked, "leads us to an organic conception of the world, but does not justify the division of the world into God, souls and objects externally related to one another."¹ On strictly admitting that the world is divided into water-tight compartments and that there is no real unity running through all its constituents and contents, not only the knowledge of things cannot be explained but the fact of interaction between one thing and another will also have to be ruled out. In over-emphasizing differences Madhva overlooks the fact of order and uniformity prevailing in the world.

Madhva has conceived the souls and matter as eternal substances. But "If the souls and matter depend on the ultimate Brahman, they cannot be regarded as substances."² Moreover, a real and ultimate dualism is inconsistent with the notion of the absolute perfection of God. On the other hand, if matter and individual souls are eternal, beginningless as well as endless, their ultimate independence has got to be admitted as a matter of fact. Madhva's conception of their eternal dependence on God, therefore, seems to be inconsistent with his own conception of their fundamental and essential nature. Why should at least eternally free souls like Lakshmi be conceived to be dependent on God we cannot quite see. They are already free there, they do not owe their freedom to the grace of God, they will ever remain free, they were not created by God and God cannot interfere with their existence. In what sense are they, then, really dependent on God ?

Madhva has maintained that if the world were unreal, it could not be known by knowing the real God, for the unreal, he says, cannot be known through the knowledge of the real. So, according to him, the scriptural texts which speak of the knowledge of 'all' through the knowledge of the One cannot be taken to mean the unreality of the world. But in so arguing out his case Madhva forgets his fidelity to his sacred-texts

1 IP. Vol. II, p. 749-50.

2 Ibid. p. 750.

themselves. Has not the Chhandogya Upanishad, immediately after having spoken of the knowledge of all through the knowledge of one, emphatically and clearly asserted that the One alone is real and the many, only a matter of speech ? In fact, in admitting that the many effects of a cause can be known through the knowledge of the latter Madhva himself implicitly and indirectly admits that the effects and their differences from their cause are not real in the same sense in which the cause is real. For, were they really real and different from their cause, just as a pen is, from a person, or difference itself from identity, they could never be known by knowing their cause, exactly as we cannot know a pen or identity by knowing a person or difference, or vice versa. The articles made of clay can be said to be known by knowing the clay, their cause, simply because they do not exist apart from it. Were they as real as clay in the sense that they could exist independently of it as clay can do independently of any one of them, they could certainly not be said to have been known through the knowledge of clay. Moreover, can it not be said that by knowing the rope as such one verily knows the illusory snake also which only appeared to be there in the place of the rope ? As a matter of fact the true knowledge of the illusory snake is the knowledge of the real rope. And even if it be admitted that the unreal things are not known by knowing their underlying reals, we certainly find it very difficult to admit that all the persons of a village or town will be known if we happen to know the chief person among them. If things are real, if jivas are real, and if their differences from one another and from God are real, they can never be known by knowing any one of them, be he God or anybody else, especially in view of the fact that God, according to Madhva, is only the efficient cause of the world, and not its Material cause. By knowing the material cause of a thing one may, in a sense, be said to have known it; but the knowledge of the efficient cause of it can in no way be said to be its knowledge. Our acquaintance with a potter does not amount to our knowledge of the different articles of clay that he has made or will make. And apart from it, if God is not the material cause of the world, as Madhva holds, it is inconsistent to adduce the example of clay and its articles to show that the world can be said to be known through the knowledge of its cause, the Brahma or God. For, the example of clay pertains to a material cause which Brahma, in the opinion of Madhva, is not. In fact, Madhva does not seem to mind inconsistency. Had he any fear of it, he could not, after having acknowledged the authority of the sacred texts, go to the length of saying that God is only the efficient cause of the world, and not its material cause. The Upanishads,

as we have seen, have declared God to be the only cause of the world, but Shri Madhvacharya, we find, has no hesitation in maintaining what suits his doctrine of difference, and thereby in exposing his own inconsistency not only with his belief in the scriptures but also with his assertion that God is an independent reality. How can God who depends upon matter for the creation of the world be really independent ?

Shri Madhvacharya has rejected those scriptural texts which describe Brähma as attributeless on the ground that they contradict so many other texts which represent Him as having attributes. But this is not what a votary of these texts should have done. If such texts contradict dvaita-texts, do not dvaita-texts contradict them ? Why should we, then, take a decision in favour of the dvaita-texts and not in favour of the advaita-propounding one's, unless it be to make these scriptures propound exactly what we see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears ? Either both types of texts should be retained and a reasonable reconciliation be sought, or the dvaita-texts should be subordinated to the advaita-texts. Dvaita or difference is a matter of common experience. Its knowledge needs no aid from scriptures. There are other adequate means of obtaining and augmenting it. Moreover, the knowledge of duality and difference has not only been definitely decried in the scriptures themselves, but is also known from our everyday experience to be a source of all sorts of strife and other evils. Is it not then unreasonable to believe that the sacred-texts have the propounding of difference for their object ?

At least in the case of some souls Madhva has admitted that wisdom and bliss constitute their essential nature. But if it is really so, can we not say that the world of ignorance and misery is only accidental to them ? For, when they are released from their bondage, no ignorance, no misery, will exist with them. And this at once seems to show two things—one that on attaining release an individual soul does not differ from God in its essential nature, and the other that in the state of release at least the world of ignorance and misery is not a reality with the released souls. Madhva, therefore, is little justified in supposing that even in the state of release eternal essences continue to persist in the souls which distinguish them from God. In retaining the distinction between them Madhva, it seems, is, as Prof. Radhakrishnan has rightly remarked, "transferring the distinctions of experience to the kingdom of God."¹ His assertion that at no stage and in no experience one's self is

1 IP. Vol. II. p. 751.

identical with Brahma is inconsistent not only with scriptural assertions but also with the assertions of so many saints and mystics all over the world.

Those who bear testimony to the identity of self with Brahma, the Absolute, do not maintain that the finite self as such is identical with the Infinite. To say that something finite is identical with what is infinite would mean a glaring self-contradiction. But there is no contradiction involved in saying that on the removal of false or accidental adjuncts what was once believed to be finite is experienced as the Infinite. When we say 'here is the same Devadatta whom we saw at Calcutta, we certainly do not mean that Devadatta as qualified by the past time and the remote place is the same as one qualified by the present time and place. Similarly when it is said that 'That thou art' (Tattavamasi) it is not the here-and-now person who is said to be identical with a remote entity. To impute such a meaning to this assertion is to betray a gross unfamiliarity with its correct sense. And to read it so as to mean 'That thou art not' (atattvamasi) is nothing short of wilful mutilation of the meaning of the sacred texts.

Madhva has admitted that a person's release from bondage can be effected only by attaining, of course, through the grace of God, the liberating knowledge of the real difference between his unique self and God. And this seems to be a clear recognition of the fact that our bondage is really due to our ignorance (avidya). If the knowledge of the ultimate difference is true knowledge, is not, then, the so-called knowledge of the people in general false knowledge? But to admit that it is so amounts to admitting that we are all in ignorance, and that is what Shankara also says, of course, in a different way.

Our discussion of Shri Madhvacharya's main views has become rather lengthy. Nevertheless we should not overlook a point of criticism which Prof. Radhakrishnan has rightly raised against the theory of election which Madhva has sought to favour. As Prof. Radhakrishnan says, "the theory of election is fraught with great danger to ethical life... Individual effort loses its point since whether one believes oneself to be the elect or the non-elect, one is bound to lapse into indifferentism and apathy."¹ Moreover, on such a view "the moral character of God is much compromised and the qualities of divine justice and divine love are emptied of all meaning and value."²

1 IP. Vol. II. pp. 750—51.

2 Ibid. p. 751.

VI Vallabha's Brahmavada

Shri Vallabhacharya or Vallabha (1481-1533)¹ was chronologically the last of those four orthodox Vedantic Acharyas (learned teachers) who lived after Shankara and laid the foundations of four famous 'Sampradayas' (religio-philosophical sects or systems). He popularized and "developed the views of Vishnusvamin, who belonged to the thirteenth century."² But, in fact, it is he himself who is generally known as the founder of that sampradaya which is called Shuddhadvaita. The word 'Shuddhadvaita' is composed of two terms, shuddha and advaita, which mean pure and non-dual (or non-dualism) respectively. As explained by Gosvami Giridharaji, in his small but famous work named Shuddhadvaitamartanda, the word 'shuddha', in this context, stands for that (entity) which is unrelated to Maya. And so, according to shuddhadvaita (Pure non-dualism), it is pure Brahma, and not the Brahma associated with Maya, who manifests Himself in the form of all the causes and effects.³ The Shuddhadvaita sampradaya is known as 'Pushtimarga (the Path of compassion) also, for it holds the attainment of Lord Krishna's compassion to be the most highly prized thing for human life. Shri Vallabhacharya is believed to be the author of as many as eighty-four books in all⁴, of which his commentaries on the Brahma-sutra, the Bhagavata Purana and on his own work named Tattvadipa are the most popular ones, and are commonly known as Anubhashya, Subodhini and Prakasha respectively.

Shri Vallabhacharya is a staunch believer in the authority of the Vedic-scriptures, especially in that of Shrimadbhagavata and the Bhagavadgita. According to him the knowledge of the nature and existence of Brahma or God can be had through the Vedic-texts only. It cannot be acquired merely through inference and argumentation. Purushottama, a famous commentator on Vallabha's commentary on the Brahma-sutra has, accordingly, tried to show the untenability of the arguments generally advanced to prove the that and what of God.⁵ This, indeed, reminds us of Shankara's assertion that Brahma is (or can be)

1 HIP., Vol. IV, p. 371.

2 IP., Vol. II, p. 756.

3 Shuddhadvaitamartanda, p. 24 (मायासम्बन्धरहितं शुद्धमित्युच्यते बुधैः ।

कार्यकारणरूपं हि शुद्धं ब्रह्म न मायिकम् ॥)

4 Vide HIP., Vol. IV, p. 373.

5 Commentary on Vallabha's Commentary on BS., pp. 74-8.

known through the Vedanta-shastra only.¹ But there is a considerable difference between Shankara's and Vallabha's views about the Brahma.

Unlike Shankara's Brahma, the Brahma of Vallabha is really the repository, creator and controller of countless qualities.² As Shri Ramanujacharya so Vallabhacharya also has maintained that the Upanishadic texts which have spoken of Brahma as being attributeless do not really deny all attributes about Him; their genuine significance consists in denying Prakrita or ordinary attributes only.³ In fact, Vallabha's conception of Brahma is akin to that of Shankara's Ishvara or God. But unlike Shankara he has not conceived two forms of Brahma, one attributeless and the other with attributes. To him there is strictly one and only one Brahma and He is endowed with unimaginable powers of creating and controlling the universe and its qualities. He is not dependent on anything whatsoever. All things of all categories depend upon Him. Vallabha calls the Brahma Bhagavan, Paramatma, Ishvara (God) and by other names also, and has viewed Shri Krishna as the Highest God or Brahma Himself.⁴

Brahma or God, according to Vallabha, is both the inherent (samavayi) and efficient (nimitta) cause of the Universe.⁵ He playfully manifests Himself in the form of each and every object of the world, and this He does merely by dint of His own free will, requiring no help at all from any quarter whatsoever. The evolution and dissolution of the world are the effects of His own powers called 'avirbhava' and 'tirobhava' shaktis respectively.⁶ Vallabha does not posit 'maya' as a principle of creation. To him 'maya' is merely a power of God which, as such, is one with Him and which He uses in manifesting Himself in His various forms. In his opinion to explain the world through 'maya' is to explain it through something second to Brahma and thus to give up non-dualism propounded in the sacred scriptures.⁷ Similarly, Vallabha

1 See Chapter II.

2 Compare Bhagavata, XI. 4. 2 (यो बाह्यनन्तस्य गुणाननन्ताननुक्रमिष्यन् स तु बालबुद्धिः रजांसि भूमेर्गणयेत् कथंचित् कालेन नैवाखिलशक्तिधाम्नः ॥)

3 Vide Vallabha's Commentary on BS. (III 2. 22).

4 Siddhantamuktavali, 3 (परं ब्रह्म तु कृष्णो हि); Antahakarana Prabodha, I (नास्ति कृष्णात् परं देवं.....)

5 Commentary on BS., I. 1. 2 and on the Sutra 'तत्तु समन्वयात्'

6 Vide Shuddhadvaitamartanda, pp. 8-13.

7 Commentary on BS. (I. 1. 6)

and his followers do not agree with the followers of the Samkhya school of thought in viewing the inert Prakriti as an independent material matrix of the world. No doubt, they have recognized it as an eternal entity, but only as a part of Brahma Himself.¹ It is, thus, held to be identical with Brahma and not as different from Him. The entire universe, being God's manifestation or effect, is virtually one with Him. He is, in their opinion, the warp and woof of all that exists. There has never been, and there will never be, a thing of any designation whatsoever without the being of Brahma in it. All entities, irrespective of their different natures and names, are in their essence Brahma and pure Brahma alone. There is no second to Him. Brahma is all and all is Brahma. He is the immutable as well as the changeable, the static and the dynamic both.² To put it in the way of the Mundaka Upanishad (II. 2. 11), Vallabha would say that the immortal Brahma alone is in front of us, Brahma alone, behind us, Brahma alone, to the right and left of us and Brahma alone, spread over and underneath us : in fact this whole world is the Brahma alone, the best of all. This doctrine is pure and simple ontological non-dualism, and has, therefore been called Shuddhadvaita. It may be called pure or exclusive Brahmadva as well, for Brahma is the only non-dual entity or existent recognized by it.

Brahma is, then, held to be the inner-controller (antaryamin) of all alike. He controls from within not only the movements of the Earth and the moon, etc., but also the actions of all the living beings everywhere. All the same He is said to be perfectly free from prejudice and partiality.³ While Shankara's Brahma, as such, is neither an agent nor an enjoyer Vallabha has viewed Him as an agent and enjoyer both.⁴ However, His essential nature is held to consist in existence, consciousness and bliss⁵, which ever remain present in their fulness in Him. But these constituents of His nature are not all present in all His manifestations. He will's the suppression of bliss and of bliss and consciousness both while manifesting Himself in the forms of the individual souls and

1 Purushottama's Commentary, p. 86 (प्रकृतेरपि तदंशत्वात्)

2 Vide Vallabha's Tattvarthadipa and Commentary on it, p. 115
(कूटस्थं चलमेव च)

3 Vide Vallabha's Commentary on BS. (II. 1. 34).

4 Ibid. (I. 1. 1).

5 Commentary on BS. (I. 1. 1) and Siddhantamuktavali, 3 (परं ब्रह्म
सच्चिदानन्दकं बृहत्)

inanimate objects respectively. Nevertheless existence is willed to be present everywhere and in all things alike.

The world, according to Vallabha, is not illusory or unreal. In so far as both its creation and sustenance are dependent upon the real will of Brahma, it is as real as He Himself. With Vallabha, the creation of the world is the same as the manifestation of God. Its existence is viewed as God's own existence. No doubt, the world of inanimate objects is not said to be possessed of consciousness and bliss, which form a part and parcel of God's nature, all the same it is regarded as being essentially identical with Him. God Himself, it is believed, becomes the world, but this makes no change in His essential nature. Vallabha and his followers do not agree with the thinkers of the Nyaya-Vaisheshika school who propound the relation of inherence (samavaya) between cause and effect and between whole and its parts, etc. In their opinion the relation between them is that of identity. And so, holding the world to be an effect of Brahma, they have maintained that the world is, in its essence, one with its cause, the Brahma. Just as all ornaments made of gold are essentially gold and gold alone so also are said all the objects of the world to be Brahma Himself.¹ No doubt, Vallabha has recognized Prakriti and Kala (time), etc., as eternal existents or things of the world, all the same he sticks fast to holding Brahma alone to be the only real existent, for all other entities or existents are believed to exist in and through Him. The pluralistic, or even dualistic, view of the world is, therefore, declared to be an erroneous view of it. Thus, the common-sense view of the world, which is definitely pluralistic, has got to be regarded as an incorrect or false one. In common parlance, there is hardly any person who speaks of the world and its contents as Brahma. We are, therefore, all, Vallabha would say, under the influence of 'avidya' or ignorance and the 'samsara' (world) in which we persons of pluralistic vision live and move, unreal. This, however, does not mean that Vallabha holds the world as such to be illusory or unreal. According to him 'avidya' is merely ours. It does not belong to God. In his opinion the world is not unreal, for an unreal world cannot be a manifestation of God's real will or stand in the relation of identity with Him. According to him the world is undoubtedly real and our viewing it as real, quite correct. What he holds to be really wrong with us is our vision of real

1 Compare Bhagavata, XI. 28.19 (यथा हिरण्यं स्वकृतं पुरस्तात् पश्चाच्च सर्वस्य हिरण्यमस्य । तदेव मध्ये व्यवहार्यमाणं नानापदेशैरहमस्य तद्वत् ॥)

manyness and diversity in the world, for, in truth, he would say, it is nothing but a manifestation of Brahma Himself and hence identical with Him. The propounders of Shuddhadvaita, therefore, hold that in the state of emancipation it is the 'samsara', and not the 'prapancha', that disappears; the latter, being God's effect produced through His 'maya' (will-power), is identical with Him.¹

In the opinion of Vallabha the jivas or individual souls are eternal, though atomic in size.² They are related to the Brahma as parts to a whole³, or as sparks to fire⁴. Their intrinsic nature is said to consist in being, consciousness and bliss and hence to be really the same as that of their Lord, the Brahma. But ordinarily, it has been observed, bliss remains shrouded or suppressed in them. So long as they are in bondage of the body, etc., they do not have clear consciousness of it. But in the state of emancipation they become fully conscious of it and, thereby, regain their lost paradise, as it were. Thus, there are two states of existence for ordinary individual souls—one the state of worldly bondage or mundane existence and the other that of liberation. In the state of liberation the "jivas remain in a free state in their nature of pure intelligence, but they have not the power to control the affairs of the universe."⁵ But besides these two categories of souls, viz., 'Baddha' and 'Mukta', the Vallabhites have admitted such souls or spirits also as do not get subjected to the ignorance of their essentially divine nature and thereby to the miserable lot of the ordinary worldly (samsarin) souls. They are called shuddha jivas (pure souls). In addition to recognizing God as the universal inner-controller (antaryamin) of the finite souls, the followers of Vallabha have also recognized their other inner-controllers who are said to be as innumerable as they themselves are and who are conceived as presiding over their works and rendering help to them.⁶

So far as the salvation of the sansari souls is concerned Vallabha has maintained 'bhakti' to be the only effective means of it. According

1 Vide shloka. 'प्रपंचो भगवत्कार्यस्तद्रूपो माययाभवत् । संसारस्य लयो मुक्तौ न प्रपंचस्य कश्चित् ॥' (quoted by Shri Brijanatha Shastri in his article, Vallabha-Vedanta, Vedantanka, Kalyana, p. 261)

2 Commentary on BS., II. 3. 19.

3 Ibid., II. 3. 43.

4 See Shuddhadvaitamartanda, p. 7 (Compare Mundaka Up., II. 1. 1

(यथा सुदीप्तात्पावकात् विस्फुलिगाः)

5 HIP., Vol. IV, p. 332.

Vide HIP., Vol. IV, p. 332 and Purushottama's Commentary on Anubhashya, p. 164-5.

to him 'bhakti' is a perfectly steady and unsurpassed love for God accompanied by the knowledge of His grandeur and excellence.¹ In interpreting 'bhakti' as 'dhruva-smriti' (firm or perpetual remembrance) Shri Ramanujacharya has viewed it as a form or state of knowledge; but to Vallabhacharya 'bhakti' is an excessive attachment to or affection for God which is different from action (karma) and knowledge (jnana) both. True bhakti or intense love of Lord Krishna makes the devotee see Him in all and all in Him.² He becomes God-intoxicated, as it were, and thinks, feels and wills in and for Him. Even in His separation (viyoga) he enjoys the delight of His presence and even in His presence he feels the pleasant pangs of His separation. Just as deluded or ignorant persons maintain in their minds unabated love (or lust) for worldly pleasures so also a devotee's love of God leaves him not even for a single moment.³ The word 'bhakti' is formed from the root 'bhaj' (which means to serve) by adding the suffix 'kti' (which means love) to it. So service (seva) and love (prema) both go to constitute the correct connotation of this word. Without service love is really hollow or empty, and without love service is either a dry drudgery or a meaningless mere formality. But this 'bhakti' or devotion, Vallabha holds, is not the result of a person's efforts. It comes, to whomsoever it comes, only through the grace of God. According to him God's grace is necessary even for grasping the extraordinary (alaukika) significance of the Vedas.⁴ God's grace is, therefore, an outstanding feature of Vallabha's Shuddhadvaita. It is for this reason that it has been, as said before, designated as Pushtimarga or the Path of God's grace; for the word 'pushti' or 'Poshana (पोषण), as used in Shrimadbhagavata, means the grace of God.⁵ And as such this path is distinguished from another path called 'Maryadamarga' or the path of prescribed duties. The proverb 'As you sow so you will reap' indicates, in brief, the gist of the 'Maryadamarga'. According to it karmas or deeds are necessary for obtaining any fruit; the doing of deeds requires efforts, and the efforts,

1 Tattvarthadipa, p. 65 (माहात्म्यज्ञानपूर्वस्तु सुदृढः सर्वतोधिकः । स्नेहो भक्तिरिति प्रोक्तस्तथा मुक्तिर्न चान्यथा ॥)

2 Vide Bhagavata, XI. 2. 45.

3 Vide Vishnu Purana, I. 20. 19 (या प्रीति मापसर्पतु)

4 Vide Anubhashya, p. 13 (अलौकिको हि वेदार्थो न युक्त्या प्रतिपद्यते । तपसा वेदयुक्त्या तु प्रसादात् परमात्मनः)

5 Bhagavata, II. 10. 4 (. . . . पोषणं तदनुग्रहः)

in their turn, depend upon desires.¹ Thus, desires, efforts and deeds, all become necessary even for that person who wants to attain emancipation or to realize God. But for the followers of the path of grace (pushti-marga), which is viewed as being fundamentally different from the 'maryadamarga' or 'pramanamarga' and as being essentially dependent upon God's grace², no knowledge, no deed, no effort is needed.³ What is required of them is nothing but their complete self-surrender to God and the renunciation of desires for worldly pleasures.⁴

Vallabha has, undoubtedly, put the greatest possible premium on man's devotion to Lord Shri Krishna and has regarded one's association with Him, in His eternal 'lila' (sports) of His eternal Brindavana in 'Goloke', as being far better than even one's becoming one with Brahma. No doubt, he has recognized the usefulness of knowledge (jnana) as a means of dispelling the darkness of one's ignorance or erroneous vision of the real nature of the world; but he has definitely subordinated it to one's dedication of life to the sweet and sacred love of Lord Shri Krishna which alone he believed to be positively conducive to His free compassion, the saviour of even sinners. All the same Vallabha did not look on self-mortification in general with the favour of approval or appreciation. This, however, does not mean that he advocated self-indulgence. Self-indulgence and love of God do not go together. And one who attaches the greatest value to the pure love of God cannot be an advocate of self-indulgence. Nevertheless, it seems to be an integral aspect of his philosophy itself which may be said indirectly or directly to conduce to moral laxity and to the encouragement of self-indulgence as well. And it will be worth our while to examine it, along with some such other aspects of Shuddhadvaita as expose it to convenient criticism.

VII A Critical View of Vallabha's Pure Non-dualism

To begin with the doctrine of Divine grace itself, it may easily be urged that it is obviously open to objection. God's grace may be regarded

1 Anubhashya, II. 3. 42 (फलदाने कर्मापेक्षः । कर्मकारणे प्रयत्नापेक्षः । प्रयत्ने कामापेक्षः)

2 Ibid. IV. 4. 9 (पुष्टिमार्गः अनुग्रहैकसाध्यः प्रमाणमार्गाद्विलक्षणः)

3 Ibid. III. 3. 29 (पुष्टिमार्गे अङ्गीकृतस्य ज्ञानादिनैरपेक्षं . . .)

4 Vide Shri Hariraya's Prameyaratnarnava ('समस्तविषयत्यागः सर्वभावेन यत्र हि । समर्पणं च देहादेः पुष्टिमार्गः स कथ्यते' quoted by Shri Baladeva Upadhyaya, Vedantanka, Kalyana, p. 249

either as free or as not free. If it is said to be free in the strict sense, it cannot be held to be something won or acquired through devotion or any other qualification for it. But, then, on the view that God bestows on men His grace freely or indiscriminately, i. e., without taking into consideration their intellectual, moral or spiritual worth, He will be open to the charges of inequality, partiality, injustice and even cruelty; and the belief in God's free grace will tend to engender in men and women alike definite apathy or indifference to moral and spiritual advancement. Nay, they may even go to the extent of freely indulging in immoral and proscribed practices, believing that even sinners can be saved through the casual or capricious grace of God. And in case this grace is taken as not free, but as being dependent upon man's deeds or devotion, it loses its significance as grace and God, its wielder, gets deprived of the full freedom attributed to Him by the believers in the doctrine of grace. It is palpably due to such difficulties involved in the advocacy of this doctrine that its upholders sometimes speak of our true devotion to or affection of God as being the result of His grace, and sometimes of God's grace as resulting from one's affection for Him. Indeed, as expressed by Dr. DasGupta, "It is impossible to say for what reason God is pleased to extend His grace; it cannot be for the relief of suffering, since there are many sufferers to whom God does not do so."¹

According to the doctrine called 'Shuddhadvaita the whole world is a manifestation of the Brahma or God Himself. But if it is really so, it may be asked, why is not God's nature, consisting in existence, consciousness and bliss, manifested intact in all objects and individuals alike ? There being no-where nothing but Brahma, His tripartite nature must be found everywhere. Either existence, consciousness and bliss are not all equally essential to the nature of Brahma, or, else, they should all have been equally manifested in all the forms of His manifestation. It does not seem to be reasonable to suggest that the Brahma can will to do away with His own nature. To say this is to say that He can will even to cease to exist. But this will involve the very conception of Brahma in self-contradiction. By the nature or essence of a thing we understand some such character or set of characteristics as it cannot part with. If 'A' can be 'A' without 'x', the latter cannot be said to constitute the nature of the former. My coat does not form part of my nature, as I remain what I am even without it. On the other hand, light and heat are

1 HIP., Vol. IV. p., 355.

held to be the nature of fire, since it cannot afford to exist without them. Wherever fire is manifested light and heat are also manifested. To urge that fire can be said to be pervading even in that piece of wood in which light and heat are not manifested would be of no avail, for, if light and heat are not manifested in a particular piece of wood, it cannot be said to be a case of the manifestation of fire. Manifestation of fire means manifestation of heat and light which constitute its nature. Just as in all manifestations of fire both heat and light are invariably present, so also, if every thing in the world were a real manifestation of the Brahma as such, existence, consciousness and bliss, which constitute His indivisible nature, should have been all manifested in all the things and persons alike. But as they are not, it does not seem to be correct to regard the world, as such, as a real manifestation of the Brahma as such. The world which is not self-existent, self-shining and of the nature of bliss cannot be said to be identical with the self-existent and self-effulgent Brahma of perfectly blissful nature.

Moreover, by conceiving the world to be a real manifestation or effect of Brahma, Vallabha subjects Him to inevitable change and thereby to impermanence and destruction. Manifestation without transformation or change is inconceivable unless it be viewed as merely apparent or unreal.

If the Brahma is all, and all, Brahma, even Prakrita or ordinary qualities must be His qualities. How can, then, they be denied of Him and those Shruti-texts which propound Him as attributeless (nirguna) be held, as they are by Shri Vallabhacharya, to be denying of Him only ordinary attributes? By a true votary of pure Non-dualism either no quality or all qualities should be attributed to his non-dual Reality, the Brahma. Moreover, Vallabha's conception of the perfectly free Brahma is not quite consistent with his conception of Him as a repository of attributes. If God's attributes are as real as He, it does not seem to be reasonable to subordinate them to Him and hold that He can control or make and unmake them.

Then, to maintain, as Vallabha does, the eternity and reality of the individual souls, the world, the time (kala) and Prakriti, etc., along with the reality and eternity of the Brahma, is really to propound, at best, a doctrine of unity-in-diversity or identity-in-difference or multiplicity and not that of pure non-dualism. The name 'Shuddhadvaita', therefore, does not seem to be an appropriate one for a philosophy like that of Vallabha. Either this philosophy should not have been called by this

name, or, if the retention of this name were insisted on, a different philosophy should have been propounded to justify it.

Again, if the individual souls or jivas are really identical with the Brahma, all their sorrows and sufferings and other evils must be virtually those of Brahma Himself. But if it be really so, the Brahma can never be held to be of blissful nature. Either the sorrows and sufferings of individual souls do not really belong to Him or He is not of the nature of bliss. But the second alternative, contradicting as it does so many scriptural texts, cannot be acceptable even to Vallabha himself. Hence there is no choice but to accept the first alternative; but to accept it is to deny the proposition that the souls are identical with Brahma.

Vallabha has viewed the individual souls as parts of the Brahma; but on this view he cannot be justified in saying, as he does, that the souls are identical with Him. The Brahma is believed to be infinite, whereas the souls are held to be atomic (finite) in size. So, even if it be admitted that Brahma, the whole, exists in and through His parts, the jivas, and the jivas, the parts, in and through the Brahma, the whole, it is not, strictly speaking, correct to propound identity between them. A whole, though immanent in its parts, transcends all its parts. It is neither the mere sum-total of the parts nor any or all of them taken separately. Moreover, the conception of the jivas (as well as the world) as parts of the Brahma is not a happy one from another point of view also. While considering it in connection with the Vishishtadvaita philosophy of Shri Ramanujacharya, who also sometimes describes the relation between the individual souls and God as that of parts and whole, we pointed out that on viewing the former as parts of the latter the eternity (nityatva) of the latter at least cannot be defended. In taking the well-known assertion of Shri Uddalaka, a seer and sage of the Chhandogya Upanishad, viz., 'Tattvamasi' (meaning 'that thou art') as being literally true, and not as only figuratively true, as Shri Ramanuja has taken it, Vallabha, indeed, seems to have done due justice to it. But on doing so he is not justified in advocating the relation of part and whole between the jivas and the Brahma. No doubt, the conception of the relation of part and whole (amsha and amshi) between them seems to be present in the sacred scriptures themselves (Brahma-sutra, II. 3.43, and Gita, XV. 7); but it has got to be so interpreted as it may not come into conflict with other sacred texts which describe the Brahma as partless, eternal, beginningless and endless, etc. Shankara, it appears, is more reasonable while taking, as we have seen, the word 'amsha' (part) to mean 'like a part' (amsha iva) and not literally in the sense of an actual part.

Vallabha, no doubt, regards our pluralistic view of the world as false or erroneous; all the same he is not tired of emphatically asserting that the world as such is quite real, as real as the Brahma Himself. But if we bear in mind the definite sense of the word 'real' as used by Shankara, following the sacred scriptures themselves, we find no justification in calling it real. Certainly the world cannot be said to be as real as the Brahma. The really real, as we have already seen, must be eternal, immutable, indestructible, self-existent and self-explanatory. So the world which depends upon the Brahma for its existence and explanation and is not immutable, etc., even according to Shri Vallabhacharya himself, does not deserve to be called real in the same sense in which the Brahma is called so. Of course, it may be regarded as real, as Shankara has done, for all practical purposes, but when viewed in the clear light of the criterion of what should be really or ontologically called real it is certainly found to be something different from it. But, at the same time, it is not quite illusory as well. That is why, as we have seen, Shankara calls it 'anirvachaniya'.

Shankara, as we have seen, has conceived 'maya' to explain the anirvachaniya satta (i. e., existence which cannot be described either as strictly real or as absolutely unreal, etc.) of the world. Maya, according to him, is not as real as Brahma and hence not a second to It. If Vallabha's conception of will or shaktis (powers) in his Brahma is not a conception of something second to Him, Shankara's conception of maya is also not so. He has also conceived maya as a shakti. And this he has done as a matter of logical necessity. There can be no explanation of becoming or of the world of change until and unless some such thing as 'maya' is posited to link it with the ultimate Reality of the nature of being. So, in rejecting 'maya' as an explanatory principle of the world Vallabha seems not only to have attempted to do away with a logical necessity, which alone can serve as a sort of link between the eternally immutable being of the Brahma on the one hand and the perpetual becoming of the world on the other, but also to have paid little heed to so many assertions of the authentic sacred texts themselves. As we have seen, the conception of maya is as old as the oldest scriptures of the world, the Vedas, and is found not only in the Upanishads but also in many other scriptures of secondary authority. Even Shrimadbhagavata, for which Shri Vallabhacharya himself has shown profound veneration, abounds in instances of accepting maya as a principle of explaining the

creation, etc., of the world of multifarious contents.¹ As a matter of fact, Vallabha has himself, sometimes, used the term 'maya' in the sense of the creative power of God. What, therefore, he really seems to deny is its independent status or secondness to Brahma or God, and not its role in the manifestation of the world. But, if that is so, Shankara will gladly join hands with him. Of course, he will not see eye to eye with him in viewing maya or Prakriti or any other thing, except the jivas in their essential nature, as being literally identical with, or as being as real as, Brahma. And in doing this he will have the strictly rational and scriptural conception of the 'really real' on his side.

VIII A bird's-eye-view of Shankara's Brahmvada as compared to the Vedantic doctrines of Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva and Vallabha.

On taking the doctrines of Shankara, Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva and Vallabha in the light of our account of the Upanishadic contents, summarily stated in chapter II, we can definitely say that Shankara is more faithful to the general spirit of these sacred texts than even Vallabha, Ramanuja and Nimbarka, nothing to say of Madhva who seems to have actually overlooked the fact of their propounding only one ultimate Reality, and by no means the ultimate reality of his five-fold differences. The essential identity of the individual soul with Brahma seems to be, as we have seen, the indubitable general view of the Upanishads. So Shankara's view of it as such can certainly be said to be more in keeping with the general purport of the sacred texts than the views of at least Ramanuja, Nimbarka and Madhva. Madhva's conception of God as being only the efficient cause of the world is apparently against the common verdict not only of the Upanishadic sages but also of even Ramanuja and others. The conception of soul as atomic in size not only seems to be based on a superficial and partial view of the scriptural texts, but is also indicative of a faulty judgement of its essential nature. The Upanishads have with one voice declared jnana to be the only direct means of one's final release, and Shankara has said exactly the same thing; but Vallabha and others seem to have raised devotion or love to the status and position of jnana which is, again, contrary to the general spirit of the original texts. By emphasizing the factor of God's grace as something indispensable to one's final release its advocates have defini-

¹ See, for instance, Bhagavata, Skandha XI, (2.37; 3.16; 7.47; 8.8; 9.16 and 19; 11. 1-3; 12.23; 13.33, 34; 14.9; 22.4, 28, 30; 23.26; 28.7; 30.49, etc.)

tely minimised the value of human effort. Shankara's Brahmapada therefore seems to be more optimistic than any of the doctrines propounded by these other orthodox thinkers. Shankara's view of one's liberation from bondage, here and now, has really no parallel in other philosophical doctrines and his view of the ultimate Reality as that which is self-existent, perfectly immutable and uncontradictable is much more logical than any other view of it which incorporates change or dependence in any form in the essential nature of the reality itself. Others' conceptions of Brahma or ultimate Reality seem to lack that metaphysical insight and logical subtlety and rigour which characterize Shankara's conception of it. In fact, their doctrines are more theological than philosophical in nature. On the other hand, Shankara seems to put definitely a greater premium on philosophical speculation than on theological assumptions, and his appeal to our own direct experience as a means of verifying the cogency of our speculations and assumptions seems to be quite scientific and untheological in nature.

10

Shankara's Brahmanavada and The Idealisms of Hegel, Green and Bradley

**"When we think existence, existence thinks in us."
(Hegel)**

"...Our conception of an order of nature, and the relations which form that order, have a common spiritual source." (Green)

"There is but one Reality, and its being consists in experience." "And Reality in the end belongs to nothing but the single Real."—(Bradley)

and the same time, the same

of the same time, the same

of the same time, the same

of the same time, the same

of the same time, the same

of the same time, the same

Chapter 10

SHANKARA'S BRAHAMAVADA AND THE IDEALISMS OF HEGEL, GREEN AND BRADLEY

I An Introductory remark

Nothing to say of thinkers belonging to different climes and countries, even contemporary thinkers of one and the same land do not always think alike. But it does not imply that thinkers of different countries or ages must necessarily hold different views. There are sometimes striking similarities between them. And it is no sin to seek and see them. A sincere and unbiased attempt at a comparative study of the thinkers of different countries may be well calculated not only to advance the cause of thought itself, but also to bridge the undesirable gulfs that are sometimes created between them. It is neither desirable nor correct to think in terms of Kipling's 'east' and 'west' which shall never meet. Such a mode of thinking definitely tends not only to jeopardize the much needed mutual understanding and fellow-feeling amongst the different peoples but also to injure the interest of so highly prized knowledge itself.

It is sometimes remarked in the west that 'there is a tendency among Indian writers to discover or see in their ancient thinkers those doctrines and principles which have really been discovered and promulgated in modern Europe'; but we cannot quite appreciate such sweeping remarks. Unmindful, therefore, of what those persons who pass such remarks would say of it, we propose to devote this chapter to a comparative study of Shankara and three most prominent western absolutists, viz, Hegel, Green and Bradley. There are, no doubt, differences between them which we shall not altogether overlook; but in the interest of our main concern, viz, the understanding of Shankara's Brahnavada, we shall be indulging more in observing their similarities rather than differences. But thereby we mean neither to over-emphasize the former nor to minimize the

importance of the latter. What is intended is simply to mark honestly the extent of the support that Shankara's Brahmovada finds in the writings of these great thinkers. We do not, however, mean to deprive them of their just claims to original thinking. That credit, we admit, is theirs. It is far from our intentions to deny it to them. Nevertheless we see no justification in denying Shankara his due.

We duly admit that modern Europe has rendered a great service to humanity and to man's knowledge by discovering and promulgating many new doctrines and principles; but we are certainly not prepared to acquiesce in the view that the task of discovering and promulgating doctrines and principles was left by God to the modern thinkers and scientists exclusively. "God", said Locke, "has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures, and left it to Aristotle to make them rational."¹ And this remark of Locke, we believe, applies as much to modern European thinkers as to Aristotle, especially so far as philosophy is concerned.

The world, it is our firm conviction, and the geologists bear clear testimony to it, was not created four or ten thousand years before Christ. It has been there for millions of years, and has witnessed the rise and fall of so many empires and civilizations. What wonder is there, then, if some of the modern discoveries and inventions of which some persons feel so proud were made, and subsequently forgotten, in lands other than that of Europe, thousands of years ago ! No doubt, there is no positive proof of it except that in the Vedas, the oldest scriptures of the world, we come across some passages which pertain to a number of things which are believed to be the creations of the minds and hands of modern men.² At least the possibility of such discoveries and inventions having been made in the remote past cannot be denied. Anyway, it is not our present concern to indulge in a controversy like this. It simply lies in noting down the similarities between Shankara on the one hand and Hegel, Green and Bradley on the other. And let us proceed to do it.

II A view of Hegel's Absolutism as compared to Shankara's Brahmovada

There cannot be two opinions about it that Hegel (1770-1831) is one of the greatest thinkers of the world, and his philosophy, a most comprehensive and hard attempt at an exhaustive explanation of the

¹ Essay, BK. IV. C. XVII 4, p. 347.

² Vide Swami Dayananda's Rigvedadi-bhashyabhumika, p. p. 279-95.

(Third impression, Ajmer)

world. But on account of its abstract nature and employment of a good many technical terms his philosophy is, at the same time, not easily intelligible. All the same it is worth-while to make an attempt to understand something of it.

Hegel, it appears, believes in a single and all-pervading reason-reality. It is his Absolute; it is his God. Mind or spirit (Geist), Idea or Absolute Idea are the names given to the selfsame reality; and it is held, among other things, to be impersonal. As Dr. McTaggart says ".....the Absolute, as demonstrated by Hegel, must not be considered as personal, and is more appropriately called 'it' than 'he'."¹ Were Hegel's God or Absolute a person it should have been, as Dr. McTaggart thinks, "consistent with His nature to say 'I am', for "the characteristic which determines personality seems, on the whole, to be generally placed in the 'I'—the synthetic unity of apperception. When a being distinguishes itself from its content—when, in other words, it finds in that content an element which is never absent, though never present in isolation, which is always the same, and whose presence determines the content to be the content of that particular being, then we call that being personal."² But Hegel's God or Absolute, in McTaggart's opinion, lacks the requisite synthetic unity of apperception, it does not distinguish itself from its content, and this makes McTaggart conceive that "Hegel did not think the Absolute to be a person."³

Self-consciousness is an essential characteristic of a person, but Hegel's Idea or God is not a self-conscious being in the strict sense. It is only in and through the self-consciousnesses of so many human beings that one can speak of its self-consciousness. As a matter of fact self-consciousness is, in Hegel's philosophy, the result of the evolution, as it were, of an all-accomplished and yet accomplishing-itself God. He, as says Prof. Thilly, does not believe that "God or the logical Idea exists as a self-conscious logical process before the creation of the world—he cannot be conscious without a world—he is a developing God and becomes fully self-conscious only in the minds of human-beings."⁴ No doubt,

1 Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, p. 58. (N. B.—Scholars, however, differ on this point. Hegelians like Principal Caird do not fail to attribute personality to the Absolute of Hegel, while Bradley and others regard the Absolute as an individual, and not as a person. In fact, this difference in views has its root in the difference between their conceptions of personality—see in this connection 'Neo-Hegelianism' (by Hiralal Halder, Heath Cranton), Appendix.)

2 Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, p. 57.

3 Ibid.

4 A History of Phil., p. 427.

Hegel's Absolute is a unity, the deepest possible unity, and "this unity is unquestionably, according to Hegel, spirit"¹; but this does not entitle us to say that Hegel believed in a personal God. As Dr. McTaggart has urged, "It might be said of a college, with as much truth as it has been said of the Absolute, that it is a unity, that it is a unity of spirit, and that none of that spirit exists except as personal. Yet the college is not a person. It is a unity of persons, but it is not a person itself. And in the same way, it is possible that the Absolute may be a unity of persons, without being a person."² Here it may be noted that Shankara's Brahman also is an impersonal Being.

Hegel's Absolute, however, is not an undifferentiated simple unity, or an inarticulated entity, a pure being. Both unity and opposition are integral to it. It is a supraorganic articulated system, a unity in diversity, to borrow Mr. Bradley's phrase. Hegel does not believe in the existence of 'God as pure thought or logical Idea.' On the other hand, he "declares that the world was eternally created" and that "the divine mind can never be without self-expression."³ "Without the world God is not God; he cannot be without creating a world, without knowing himself in his other. There must be unity and opposition in the Absolute: God is not separate from the world."⁴ Here Hegel seems to differ as well as, in a sense, agree with Shankara. He differs from Shankara in so far as his Absolute is a concrete whole, 'the unity which realizes itself in the differences, and not a unity in which all differences are lost'⁵, while Shankara's Brahma, the absolute Reality, is, as we have seen, a perfectly homogeneous being. Yet, as Prof. Mukerji has observed, it seems to be ".....a necessary corollary of Hegel's theory that the Absolute as a harmonious whole cannot be other than blissful"⁶, so in this respect Hegel's Absolute may be said to be similar to Shankara's Brahma which is also of the nature of perfect bliss. Moreover, it may be added that just as Hegel's God is no God without the world so also Shankara's Ishvara or God necessarily requires a world consisting of the individual souls and matter to be ruled by Him.⁷ But this is certainly not the conception of the Highest Reality which must be free from all limitations and inconsistencies which God as containing all the distinctions and changes inside Himself can undoubtedly not be.

1 Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, p. 58.

3 A History of Phil., p. 427.

5 The Nature of Self, p. 263.

7 SBG, XIII. 19.

2 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

6 Ibid. p. 265.

As to Hegel's reality being reason, idea, spirit or mind there seems to be no difference of opinion among the interpreters of his works. It seems to be admitted on all hands that according to Hegel everything has its beginning and being in one and the same principle of reason which, by virtue of its own nature, evolves the entire paraphernalia of the universe. There is no object, no event, as a matter of fact nothing, in which the Absolute does not manifest itself. We, of course, distinguish between the objective world and the subjective mind, the natural phenomena and the mental processes, as if they were entirely different things; but to Hegel they are all expressions or manifestations of the self-same ultimate principle of reason. There is no ultimate duality, no real gulf, between the knower and the known. "When we think existence, existence thinks in us."¹ "Nature is in itself rational, and knowledge has to apprehend the reason actually present in it."² "Hegelian idealism..... consists in regarding the universe in toto as an embodiment of impersonal thought."³ "In Hegel we find the view that the real or actual is the manifestation of spirit or mind, which determines itself according to the notion or logic that is involved in its own nature."⁴ "What is rational is real, and what is real is rational."⁵ To Hegel, as says Prof. Thilly, "thought and being are identical."⁶ In the words of Dr. Hoffding he ".....conceives the idea, the spiritual principle as the innermost essence, the true existence underlying nature. Hegel's philosophy is really a philosophy of Spirit from beginning to end, it is an attempt to make the science of mind absolute science just as materialism is an attempt to make the science of matter absolute science.....The true expression of the essence of existence runs : everything is spirit and spirit is everything." This account of Hegel's Absolute again recalls to our mind Shankara's view of the ultimate Reality. Both Hegel and Shankara, it may be pointed out, are believers in one ultimate reality which is essentially spiritual in nature and the ground and support of all that exists or appears to exist. Thus, Hegel is as anti-materialistic as Shankara is.

Then, Hegel's reality is, undoubtedly, a living, developing, process, 'a spiritual process', 'a logical process of evolution', a dynamic being

1 Hoffding : A History of Modern Phil., (1920) p. 180.

2 Ibid.

3 DasGupta : Indian Idealism, p. 23.

4 Ibid. p. 53.

5 Quoted from Hegel in Indian Idealism, p. 53.

6 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 424.

7 Ibid. p. 426.

which is ever expressing itself in the form of inorganic, organic and mental evolutes or souls at different stages of its eternal process. To put it in Prof. Thilly's words, "In nature reason reveals itself in its otherness, in its externality and succession, in space and time. We cannot truly say that the logical Idea passes over into nature. the logical Idea is nature, nature is a form of the logical Idea, it is the Idea in its spatial and temporal form. Hegel calls it petrified intelligence, an unconscious intelligence, concepts spread-out so to speak. Moreover, nature is a stage of transition through which the logical Idea passes in its evolution into mind or spirit (Geist). Mind or spirit passes through dialectical stages of evolution, revealing itself as subjective mind, objective mind and absolute mind.....Subjective mind expresses itself as soul (mind dependent on nature), consciousness (mind opposed to nature) and spirit (mind reconciled with nature in knowledge)."¹ This evolution, according to Hegel, is, however, 'not temporal in the sense that there was ever a time when there was no evolution.'²

Despite the fact that he speaks of a timeless process of evolution of the Idea or spirit, Hegel, it should be noted, has no hesitation in declaring that "the spirit is eternally realized in itself" or that "the reason is in itself self-complete."³ And the ground of such a stand is said to lie in the fact that "all forms of the real are comprehended in reason" and that "all dialectic varieties that take part in evolutionary forms are comprehended in the nature of reason."⁴ "Reason is the same everywhere, and everywhere the divine reason is at work : the universe or that which is real and eternal in it, is the result of the thought of God."⁵

The conception of the Absolute or Idea, on the one hand, as an ever-accomplished fact, and on the other, as one which is ever accomplishing itself, is, however, apparently unintelligible. If 'spirit is eternally realized in itself', or if 'the reason is in itself self-complete', it is quite pertinent to ask : how is this self-completeness or eternal self-realizedness of Reason or Spirit to be reconciled with its evolution which is said to be ever going on ? Are not the two, completeness and evolution or process, incompatible if predicated of one and the same reality ? Shankara also, we may say, was confronted with a similar problem when he spoke of the creation of the world of changes from the changeless perfect

1 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 429.

3 DasGupta : Indian Idealism, p. 53.

5 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 428.

2 Ibid. p. 427.

4 Ibid.

Brahma. And we have seen that he tried to get over the difficulty by distinguishing between the vyavaharika (practical or common-sense) and paramarthika (ultimate) points of view, and by viewing the world and its changes as an appearance to the finite minds only, and as something unreal from the point of view of the ultimate Reality, viz., Brahma, in which, as such, there is nothing new, nothing created, no change. Hegel also, it appears, has in his mind more or less a similar explanation of the problem concerned, when he holds, as understood by Dr. DasGupta, that the "process of the evolution of the manifestation of this spirit in subjective and objective forms and categories is more or less an illusion."¹ The opinion that Hegel held such a view is vouched for by Prof. Wallace also when he interprets Hegel as holding that "the consummation of the infinite end consists merely in removing the illusion which makes it still unaccomplished", and that "In the course of its process the Idea makes itself that illusion by supplying an antithesis to confront itself, and it again consists in getting rid of the illusion which it has created."² Hegel's assertions that "the Idea is the only true reality"³ and that "the contradictory aspects of things are meaningless appearances"⁴, do not fail to recall to our mind Shankara's similar assertions about Brahma and the world respectively. If the Absolute of Hegel or Brahma of Shankara is an ever and already perfect spiritual principle or being, there seems to be really no other plausible alternative but to hold that the world as it appears to us, and at all stages of its evolution, must be an appearance only, and not reality as such which knows no incompleteness or newness at all. We cannot definitely say whether Hegel did or did not entertain the same view as Shankara did. But in case the interpretation put on his assertions by Dr. DasGupta and Wallace is faithful to what he really meant by them, there seems to be little doubt that the great German thinker has in this respect also a close affinity with the great Indian Brahṃavadin. 'This interpretation of Hegel', as Dr. Deva Raj has also observed, 'really brings him very close to the Advaita-vedānta (of Shankara).'⁵

Shankara, however, seems to be more consistent in his view than Hegel. For, whenever he speaks of Brahma in itself he describes it as

1 Indian Idealism, p. 53.

2 Logic of Hegel, p. 351 (quoted by Dr. DasGupta in his 'Indian Idealism', p. 53)

3 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 423.

4 Ibid. p. 424.

5 Purvi Aura Pashchimi Darshana (Second edition), p. 152.

(The Eng. Trans. and words within brackets are ours)

perfectly immutable and free from all duality and distinctions, while Hegel's perfect Absolute or God is never without the world. But if 'nature is a form of the logical Idea', if the world is really 'the Idea in its special and temporal form'¹, if the evolution is literally 'a spiritual process'², if the 'Absolute is eternally that into which it develops'³, if it is a 'unity of differences', 'a totality of parts', 'a unified yet differentiated whole'⁴, 'full of negations, contradictions and oppositions'⁵, it baffles all our attempts to draw a real line of demarcation between the real and the apparent. Nevertheless, if Wallace's reading of Hegel's philosophy is correct, we see no reason why we should not see affinity between his view and that of Shankara with regard to the reconciliation of the idea of a perfect Absolute or Brahma with the idea of its being present in the evolutionary process of the phenomenal world.

The fact that Hegel called the evolutionary process of the world an appearance or illusion should not, however, mislead us to think that he was a subjective idealist who thought of the world as being a creation of an individual person's mind only. To attribute such a view to him would mean a gross misunderstanding of his views. According to him 'the forms of action' or the categories of reason "are not empty husks or lifeless ideas, but objective thoughts, spiritual forces which constitute the very essence of things."⁶ "Our thinking", it is maintained, "evolves or develops rationally; it moves logically, genetically, dialectically : in this sense, it is universal, transempirical, transcendental or metaphysical, as Hegel calls it."⁷ The world or nature is explicitly declared by Hegel to be 'a system of stages in which one necessarily proceeds from the other'. It is a manifestation of the 'Absolute Idea', of the 'universal and transempirical' thought, and not of the particular ideas or empirical thoughts. It is the 'God Idea', and not the ideas of this or that individual, that Hegel regards as the essence of things. His 'dialectical thought expresses the innermost essence of the universal mind.'⁸ It is his 'Divine Idea' of which nature is said to be a form, and which reveals itself also as a subjective mind⁹, and 'becomes soul in the animal organism.'¹⁰ Thus, Hegel seems to have clearly dissociated himself from subjective idealism. And in this respect he is quite at one with Shankara.

1 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 429.

3 Ibid. p. 427.

5 Ibid. p. 424.

7 Ibid. p. 426.

9 Vide Ibid. p. 429.

2 Ibid. p. 426.

4 Ibid. p. 425.

6 Ibid. p. 427.

8 Ibid. p. 428.

10 Ibid. p. 430.

Shankara, as we have seen, is a sat-karyavadin who holds that the effect is potentially present in the cause and that nothing comes out of nothing. Hegel, we find, is also a staunch advocate of the same view. According to him, "The Absolute is eternally that into which it develops : the categories are eternally potential in it, they have never evolved out of nothing."¹

The process of evolution, according to Hegel, though regarded as a spiritual and teleological process, is an unconscious process. As Prof. Thilly has put it ".....the universe is a process of evolution, in which ends or purposes are realized, the purposes of universal reason. This is an organic or teleological conception."² Shankara, on the other hand, deems the creation of the world to be definitely a conscious creation as it is clear from his polemic against the Samkhya conception of evolution from the unconscious Prakriti. In fact, an unconscious teleology is a contradiction in terms.

As to the conception of teleology, some interpreters of Shankara's works have, no doubt, tried so to expound them as to show that he was an upholder of the teleological view of the world-process. For instance, in the opinion of Prof. Kokilleshwara Shastri, Shankara's "Brahman has manifested itself as external nature, with a view to reveal to the human beings its own immense and infinite riches."³ Brahman, according to Prof. Shastri, "is realizing its own swarup gradually in higher and higher forms, through the successive stages of nature."⁴ On the basis of Shankara's assertion that 'if names and forms were not manifested, the unconditional nature of Atma (or Brahman), viz., pure cognition would not have been known'⁵, Dr. Deva Raj is also inclined to think that according to Shankara ".....the purpose of the world-process is to manifest the nature of Brahman."⁶ Now, if this is a correct reading of Shankara's view, we cannot avoid thinking that Hegel's philosophy has again a point of similarity with Shankara's Brahmapada. But personally I am inclined to believe that the idea of the world-process as a whole as moving towards a definite goal, whatever it be, is rather foreign to Shankara's Brahmapada. So far as I believe Shankara has no-where maintained that Brahma is realizing some purpose of its own through

1 Thilly : A Hist. of Phil., p. 427.

2 Ibid. p. 423.

3 An Intro. to Adwaita Phil., p. 2.

4 Ibid. p. 3.

5 SB. Br. Up. II. 5. 10.

6 Purvi Aura Pashchimi Darshana, p. p. 186—187 (Eng. Trans. ours.)

the world-process. On the other hand, we find Shankara openly rejecting the proposal of attributing a purpose to his Ishvara or God, nothing to say of Brahma which has been declared to be altogether free from the world-process, for the simple reason that all His desires are ever fulfilled.¹ However, if we view the world, and especially the human life in it, as a means of our attainment of the emancipating knowledge, we may construe it as a purposive creation. But that would not be tantamount to the purpose of Brahma as such, or of the world process as a whole. According to Shankara each individual has to work out his own salvation for which he has to make assiduous efforts. If the world-process were, by its very nature, moving towards that goal or towards any other goal, all Vedic prescriptions pertaining to our duties will lose all their significance, and human freedom to do this or that will simply be a farce. Accordingly, Shankara, who not only believed in human freedom and Vedic prescriptions but also maintained that there can be no purpose of Brahma or God, cannot, rightly speaking, be said to be a believer in any purpose of either Brahma or of Ishvara. In our opinion, therefore, to read the same sort of purposiveness in Shankara's Brahmanavada as there is in Hegel's Absolutism does not seem to be very fair and just.

The highest knowledge for Hegel is the knowledge of the Absolute Idea or of that 'which is real and eternal.'² A person, Hegel says, 'has reached the highest stage of knowledge when he has grasped the Idea of the world.'³ 'It is the business of philosophy, according to Hegel, to know nature and the entire world of experience as it is, to study and comprehend the reason in it—not the superficial, transitory, and accidental forms, but its eternal essence.'⁴ So here also Hegel seems to be speaking like Shankara who distinguished between para-vidya and apara-vidya, the higher knowledge and the lower knowledge, meaning thereby the knowledge of the ultimate Reality, viz., Indeterminate Brahma or pure Being and the knowledge of the qualified Brahma respectively, and viewed the former as the only true knowledge. But this point of similarity between them does not seem to go very far. For, while Shankara views the ultimate Reality as a perfectly homogeneous Being, to Hegel it is a being-in-becoming. If Shankara's Reality may figuratively be described as an acid in which everything gets dissolved, Hegel's Absolute may be viewed as a gigantic box which contains everything in it, or more appropriately as an infinite organism composed of psychic states, vital forces, flesh, bones and all sorts of fine and filthy things.

¹ SBS. II. 1. 33.

² Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 428.

³ Ibid. p. 423.

⁴ Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 422; see also Indian Idealism, p. 53.

Hegel was, in fact, more interested in explaining the world-process than in having a direct knowledge of the ultimate Reality as it is. There is hardly any aspect of the world to the explanation of which he has not applied his dialectic method. It is generally believed that "in the history of philosophy Hegelian method is probably the greatest attempt at an exhaustive explanation of the world-process.¹ "There is no aspect which it leaves untouched. Besides the world of nature, it tries to explain or understand in toto the animal-world and the ethical and rational, philosophical, literary and religious history of sentient man."² But Shankara, on the other hand, attaches little importance to the explanation of these various aspects of the world. His dominant interest lies elsewhere. Nothing short of the highest knowledge or direct vision of the non-dual Ultimate Reality or Brahma can satisfy him. And the reason for this difference between their attitudes is not far to seek. While Hegel is actuated by a strong desire to know the reality of the world, both subjective and objective, Shankara is motivated not only by an equally potent thirst for the knowledge of the ultimate Sat or Real but also by a genuine desire for the attainment of permanent peace and eternal bliss which, as he came firmly to believe, cannot be found in the manifold and transitory world. His desire for freedom from the evils of the world or for Moksha (liberation from bondage) made him rather indifferent to the study of the world as such.³ Hegel, however, busied himself in the analytico-critical study of the world around him. In the first place, probably, because he started with the belief that the truly Real must be found by dissecting the nature of this world itself, and secondly, because the philosophical traditions of his own country and of the countries around it had probably made him believe that a true philosopher should have no practical considerations with him, but should be actuated purely by a desire for knowledge. Born and brought up as he was under the influence of secular optimism of European countries it was but natural for him to take up the existing order of the world around and to devote himself whole-heartedly to as thorough an explanation of it as it was speculatively possible for an earnest seeker of truth.

As generally with other great thinkers of Europe so with Hegel also thought, or 'hard thinking' as he calls it, seems to be the only means of

1 Purvi Aura Pashchimi Darshana, p. 147 (Eng. Trans. ours).

2 Ibid. p. 148.

3 Vide, SB. Mand. Karika, I. 7 (न तु परमार्थचिन्तकानां सृष्टावादः)

knowing the ultimate truth. In his opinion, as Prof. Thilly has put it, "This object cannot be attained by the artistic intuitions of genius or similar mysterious ways, as Schelling and others supposed; there is no other way than that of hard thinking."¹ Being, which is a rational process according to him, "cannot be realized by 'mystical feeling, aesthetic intuitions or happy guesses,' but 'must be thought.'"²

Now, if, by objecting to the view of Schelling who held that God can be apprehended through intellectual intuition only and by maintaining that the Absolute can be known by hard thinking or thought only, Hegel meant that the Absolute is an object of thought or is open to discursive thinking, he is definitely wrong and Shankara would certainly not endorse his view. On becoming an object of thought the Absolute which includes thought as well as everything else cannot have thought as something extraneously related to it. If it includes thought, it cannot be an object of thought; if it is an object of thought it does not include it. Hegel, we believe, had too clear a mind to be guilty of such a glaring violation of logical thinking. We are, therefore, inclined to believe that what he actually meant was simply to state that being of the nature of thought the Absolute is always present in thought. Probably his intention was to maintain something somewhat akin to what has been maintained in the Kena Upanishad which, while denying that Brahma can be an object of thought or knowledge, has explicitly asserted that it is known in every act of knowing.³ But if so, his view may to some extent be likened to that of Shankara and the said Upanishad. But, strictly speaking, there is more difference than resemblance between them on this point. For while Hegel is openly opposed to holding immediacy as a means of knowing the Absolute, immediacy in Shankara's Brahmanavada is said to be the only certain and direct means of acquiring the knowledge of the highest truth. In the words of Prof. A. C. Mukerji, "Immediate experience is the very heart of Shankara's absolutism, whereas Hegel would never tolerate pure immediacy in absolutism..... It is true that there was a stage in the development of Hegel's thought when he accepted as the ultimate criterion of truth some type of immediacy to which reason was supposed to be unable to rise; but this was only a stage which he overgrew, and as a result, he broke off his friendship with Schelling. The strength of Hegelian idealism is in its conception of the concrete univer-

1 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 424.

2 Ibid. p. 426.

3 Kena Up. 2. 4 (प्रतिबोधविदितं)

sal, the mediated unity, whereas Shankara's absolutism is nothing if it is shorn of immediate experience."¹ And so far as the question of knowing the absolute reality is concerned Shankara's position, we may add, is more sound than that of Hegel.

Hegel has maintained that thought is capable of determining or knowing the nature of the Absolute. But as we understand thought moves in relations. It is a relational mode. It cannot do without dissecting. Without duality and relations it cannot exist. Even in the form of its simplest unit, viz., judgement, it must have a subject and a predicate, a that and a what which together go to constitute its content. Where there is no duality, no finitude, there is also no place for relations. As Mr. Bradley has rightly observed, "There are no relations properly except between things finite. If we speak otherwise, it should be by a licence."² As nothing can be conceived to fall outside the Absolute Reality it cannot truly be said to be related to anything whatsoever. To quote Mr. Bradley again, "...to speak of a relation between phenomena and Reality is quite incorrect."³ But thought without relations is unthinkable. How can, then, it be said to be of the nature of the Absolute Reality, or vice versa? And how can, then, the Absolute be known through thought? No doubt, thought besides detaching the predicate from the subject also tries to unite them; but it cannot fully succeed in establishing this unity, for it cannot give up its nature ever to dissect. Prof. T. P. Raju has rightly maintained that "...thought cannot transcend the relational form. It is the nature of thought to distinguish and try to synthesise. But it has no power to unite as it cannot get rid of its other trait.....It is true that thought is both analytical and synthetical. But the latter nature is a tendency but not a power, and can restore only as much unity as is possible in any relation. Hence thought cannot be the nature of the infinite."⁴

If the Absolute were exactly of the nature of thought, thought should have been able fully to realize it, and should not have failed to know the relation of the Absolute as accomplished to the Absolute as accomplishing itself. But really speaking, Hegel has not been able to show any definite relation between them. Simply to describe the accomplishing process as an illusion is not to bring out its exact relation to the ever-accomplished Absolute. To put it in Prof. Raju's words, "If the infinite

1 The Nature of Self, pp. 265-66.

2 Appearance And Reality, p. 285 (Foot-notes).

3 Ibid.

4 The Philosophical Quarterly, Jan., 1933, p. 307 (Vol. VIII. No. IV).

is thought, if thought itself is creating the illusion, it must be able to understand its own mystery. That thought is unable to do so is sufficient proof that the nature of the infinite is not thought but transcends it."¹ That the Absolute must be immanent in thought seems to be quite reasonable to hold; but to maintain that it is exactly of the nature of thought and so can be known by thought is, on the one hand, to deprive it of its absoluteness and, on the other, to ignore the limitations of thought itself.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Bergson has rightly maintained that thought mutilates reality and that reality as such can only be known by directly participating in its nature by means of intuition. Shankara has also maintained more or less the same thing. He has not, of course, categorically denied the usefulness of thought in the matter concerned. But he has certainly said that thought independently of the scriptures and the immediate experience is not capable of giving us the direct and definite knowledge of the ultimate Reality. The practical efficiency of thought in matters secular has willingly been accepted by him. This point will, however, engage our attention in chapter XI, and hence need not be further elaborated here. What needs to be clearly borne in mind in the present context is that "while Hegelian absolutism will not tolerate immediate experience as a test of truth and reality,"² in Shankara's Brahmanavada, on the other hand, immediacy occupies a very important place. And in point of fact thought itself is in a way dependent on some sort of immediacy without which it cannot probably exist. Thought, as we understand it, and as Hegel has maintained, means mental mediation, and, as such, "...it must have something to mediate. So if the immediacy is removed the mediation too goes with it."³ What thought mediates must not itself be the result of its mediation, but something which is available there prior to and independently of the act of mediation. If not immediacy, what else can it be? The necessity of immediacy for mediation or thought has been very well recognized by Dr. McTaggart when he has unhesitatingly admitted that it is not possible for thought to exist without it.⁴ Thus, to hold that the Absolute is of the nature of thought is to make it dependent upon some sort of immediacy which it is not. And this clearly amounts to compromising its absoluteness.

1 The Phil. Quarterly, Jan., 1933 p. 310. 2 The Nature of Self, p. 310.

3 The Philosophical Quarterly, Jan., 1933, p. 303. (Article by Prof. Raju)

4 Vide Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic, para 45. (quoted in The Philosophical Quarterly above referred to).

So, to recapitulate our brief, non-technical and general account of Hegelian absolutism as compared to Shankara's Brahnavada we may observe that there are fundamental points of both difference and resemblance between them. So far as their views about immediacy and indeterminate reality are concerned Shankara and Hegel, it may be definitely said, do not see quite eye to eye with each other. The former emphatically asserts them while the latter is openly opposed to them. But this fundamental difference between them seems to be almost eclipsed by the vital similarity that exists between their other views. To Shankara and Hegel both the Reality as such is impersonal. Both view it as one, and as being spiritual in nature. Both are Sat-karyavadins and equally opposed to materialism and dualism. As is Shankara's Brahma all in all so is also Hegel's Absolute the entire warp and woof of all that exists or will exist. Hegel has viewed his Absolute as an ever-accomplished perfect being and has opined that our view of it as accomplishing itself through the world-process is in a certain sense illusory. So in holding such a view of the Absolute and the world-process he seems to be saying very much the same thing as Shankara has said about his Brahma and the world respectively. The true knowledge according to both Shankara and Hegel consists in knowing the real nature of the ultimate Reality itself. All other knowledge is inferior to it. Hegel's view of his Absolute as a harmonious whole may be said to be equivalent to holding it as being blissful, and that is again something, if not exactly identical with, at least very much similar to, the view of Shankara whose Brahma is not only perfect consciousness but also perfect bliss.

III Shankara and T. H. Green

After having seen Hegel's recognition of some of the tenets of Shankara's Brahnavada let us proceed to see those features of it which it has in common with the philosophy of T. H. Green (1836-1882), a well-reputed English thinker of great insight.

Green is commonly recognized as an objective idealist. In his opinion¹, man is not an event in the chain of natural events. He cannot be a mere product of matter or a resultant of natural forces. For, had he himself been so, he could not advance a theory of such phenomena or forces as an explanation of his own being. He is essentially a self-conscious, free, spiritual being, manifestation of the universal spiritual principle which organizes, unifies and explains

¹ Vide Green's Prolegomena, Book I, Chapter I and II.

nature and its phenomena. A spiritual principle alone, Green thinks, can make the unity order and system in nature possible. All natural phenomena, all links that constitute natural order, exist in time; but the self, the human consciousness, which is essentially a free conscious entity, does not come there-in. It is not in time and has no origin. It is the eternal universal consciousness itself which reproduces itself in the form of individual consciousnesses. The highest ideal of man, according to Green, is, therefore, to realize the essential perfection of his nature, to lift himself up to God. And it is through self-consciousness alone that he can know the true nature of the ultimate Reality.

In Prof. Thilly's words, "Man for Green is not merely a child of nature.....Man is a spiritual being and as such not a member in the series of natural events. Without the assumption of such a spiritual self, there can be neither knowledge nor morality.....There can be no knowledge of nature without a unifying, organizing spiritual principle.....there can be no order of nature itself without such a principle.....That there is such an all-uniting consciousness, is implied in the existence of a world. What it is, we can know only through its acting in us. As a knowing, self-conscious being, man exists as free activity,—as activity that is not in time.....Self-consciousness has no origin, it never began because it never was not. All the processes of brain and nerve and tissue, all the functions of life and sense, including the successive phenomena of our mental history, are determined by the universal consciousness.....We are not so much determined by the universal consciousness as made the subjects of its self-communication."¹ "The most final form of moral endeavour, he tells us, is a spiritual act in which the heart is lifted upto God,.....the supreme value for man is man himself in his perfection."²

These clearly worded quotations from Prof. Thilly's history of philosophy, though containing only a very brief and concise account of Green's philosophical views, do not fail to bring out many points of our interest. In the first place, they give out that important feature of Prof. Green's philosophy which places him, if not in close vicinity of, at least within the same fold with Shankara. And it is that consciousness, according to Green is not a property of the reality but reality itself. Green's postulation of a spiritual Principle as an explanation of all knowledge and nature alike is clearly reminiscent of Shankara's conception of

1 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 500.

2 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 503 and Vide Prolegomena, pp. 220—24.

Brahma or universal Self as being the ground and support of all that exists or appears to exist. The order and organization of nature, Green says, is not possible without there being a conscious principle to account for it¹; and this reminds us of Shankara's rejection of the Samkhya view of creation from unconscious Prakriti by maintaining that the order and arrangement perceptible in the world can be explained only by positing a conscious cause of it.

Consciousness or self-consciousness, according to Green, can never be a product of matter or of natural forces or processes; for the material or natural conditions, being the constituents of the world of experience, cannot originate or explain the conscious principle which makes that world possible.² Consciousness is neither natural nor a result of nature, for it is through consciousness alone that nature exists for us.³ And this view of Green is exactly analogous to the view of Shankara who has also criticized the Charvaka view of the creation of consciousness from matter almost in the same manner. The materialist who believes consciousness to be a product of matter, Shankara has urged, can mean by consciousness either the perception of the elements or matter, or of a quality thereof. But, according to Shankara, he cannot maintain either of these views. "Should he say that consciousness is the perception of the elements and what springs from the elements, we remark that in that case the elements and their products are objects of consciousness and that hence the latter cannot be a quality of them, as it is contradictory that anything should act on itself..... As little could consciousness, if it were a mere quality of the elements and their products, render them objects of itself. For form and other (undoubted) qualities do not make their own colour or the colour of something else their objects, the elements and their products, on the other hand, whether external or belonging to the Self (the organism) are rendered objects by consciousness. Hence in the same way as we admit the existence of the perceptive consciousness which has the material elements and their products for its objects, we also must admit the separateness of that consciousness from the elements."⁴ So, Consciousness for Shankara, as for Green, is, quite different from all other things which are or can be known in and through it. It is, therefore, absolutely unreasonable, according to both of them, to view it as an epi-phenomenon or by-product of any object or objects whose entire significance depends upon it. Thus, both Green

1 Vide Prolegomena, pp. 23—33.

2 Ibid. pp. 22—23.

3 Ibid. p. 13.

4 SBS. III. 3. 54 (Thibaut's Trans.)

and Shankara cannot only be said to be strongly opposed to materialism but also to have advanced almost similar arguments to prove its untenability. Just as for Shankara there exists nothing independently of Brahma, the ubiquitous consciousness, so also for Green consciousness seems to be all in all.

The ultimate reality or 'all-uniting consciousness' of Green, as Thilly has observed, can be known 'only through its acting in us.'¹ In other words, self-realization, according to Green, may be said to be the only gate-way to the realization of the universal spiritual principle.² And this, again, is something which seems to be very much like Shankara's view of Brahma-realization through self-realization.

One's Self, according to Shankara, is not the same as the changing states of one's mind. For while the mental states undergo change, their witness, the self, remains present throughout, and what thus continues to remain in the midst of changes is different from those changes or changing things (*vyavarta-maneshu yadanuvartate tattebhyobhinna*). So also according to Green there is a world of difference 'between change and consciousness of change.'³ "No one and no number of a series of related events", says he, "can be the consciousness of the series as related. Nor can any product of the series be so either. Even if this product could be anything else than a further event, it could at any rate only be something that supervenes at a certain stage upon such of the events as have so far elapsed. But a consciousness of certain events cannot be anything that thus succeeds them. It must be equally present to all the events of which it is the consciousness."⁴ So for Green, as Thilly has said, ".....a mere succession of impressions or sensations is not knowledge", "knowledge is not possible without a self that has these sensations and organizes them."⁵ In other words, the changes of our consciousness are not the same as the consciousness of those changes; they cannot give rise to it. For their knowledge there must be some such thing as is one and independent of them and has the fitness to relate and bind in one these many. Such an agency indispensable for knowledge, according to Shankara and Green both, is our Self or consciousness alone.

Here it may also be added that Green is as much against the theory of universal becoming as Shankara is. 'Being' seems to be as funda-

1 A Hist. of Phil., p. 501.

2 Vide Prolegomena, pp. 78—79.

3 Ibid. p. 20.

4 Ibid. p. 21.

5 Thilly : A Hist. of Phil, p. 501.

mental to the former as it is to the latter. Just as Shankara has vehemently criticized the Buddhistic doctrine of momentariness, so has also Green criticized "Hume's attempt to combine the theory of flux with causal connection.....according to Shankara as well as Green, causal connection can exist only between things that are recognisable at different times, and not between the perishing existences, such as the ideas and impressions are supposed to be by Hume and his Indian predecessors, the Buddhists."¹ No knowledge of change or succession, in fact no experience of any sort whatsoever, is ever possible without there being a changeless something which may serve the purpose of synthesising the different elements involved in it. Accordingly, both Green and Shankara deem it absolutely necessary to postulate an identical self which alone, according to them, can satisfactorily account for all our experiences alike.

Man, in the opinion of Green, is a 'spiritual being', 'a free activity', though not perfectly free, for, in some measure and in some sense, he is dependent upon the universal principle of consciousness working in and through him. Similarly the individual souls or jivas of Shankara are essentially spiritual beings who are free as well as not free in a certain sense. They are not free, for their actions are partly determined by their previous impressions or samsakaras and because they have got to bear the fruits of their good or bad actions; but all the same they are free because they have in them the power to create new impressions, good or bad, as they like.

That Green's notion of true reality as being something unalterable is just like Shankara's definition of it we have already seen in chapter III. It may, however, be added here that Green like Shankara believes in the ultimate reality of a single principle of consciousness and that from his view of reality as an unalterable entity it logically follows that whatever is not of unalterable nature must, strictly speaking, be viewed as unreal. And it is what Shankara has also maintained. He is not only a believer in the reality of one Brahma alone, but also an uncompromising advocate of the unreality of all things that are subject to change. If Shankara be asked : 'where is this Brahma, the single Reality?', he would certainly say that it is everywhere and in everything; so also we find Green answering the question 'what is the real?' by saying that 'the real is everything'.² Thus, we find Green supporting Shankara's views in a significant measure.

1 The Nature of Self, pp. 185—86,

2 Prolegomena, p. 29,

IV Mr. F. H. Bradley's Absolutism in its comparison and contrast with Shankara's Brahnavada.

It is generally believed that "Among Western thinkers Bradley comes nearest to Shankara....."¹, or that 'his philosophy bears the greatest resemblance to that of Shankara'². As a matter of fact, there is much in Bradley's philosophy which seems to justify such remarks. Those readers of his 'Appearance And Reality' who have had previous acquaintance with Shankara's works are, indeed, often reminded of many of the fundamental views of the latter. In many respects his absolutism seems to be, to put it in Prof. A. C. Mukerji's words, 'an unconscious exposition of the advaita doctrine'³ of Shankara.

In the very introduction of his monumental work, viz., Appearance And Reality, we find Mr. Bradley contrasting reality with appearance and defining metaphysics as 'an attempt to know reality as against mere appearance'⁴; and this at once recalls to our mind Shankara's notion of paravidya or highest knowledge, in contradistinction from his notion of apara vidya or lower knowledge, as an enquiry which has for its object the ultimate Reality or Brahma. This clearly shows not only a unanimity of purpose between their philosophical endeavours but also an affinity between them with regard to a broader issue pertaining to the nature of the world of our every-day experience.

Just as Shankara's celebrated commentary on Badarayana's Brahmasutras starts with the notion of super-imposition or false identification, meaning thereby that our common notions about our self, the knower, and the world which is an object of our knowledge are erroneous (avidyatmaka), so also the very first Book of Mr. Bradley's well-known Essay begins with the words 'illusion' and 'error' and in the very first paragraph of it he has asserted that 'the world, as.....understood, contradicts itself; and is therefore appearance, and not reality.'⁵

Bradley has, indeed, taken great pains to bring out the contradictions and inconsistencies involved in our common concepts about the world. All the fundamental concepts in terms of which we understand the world, such as, substance, quality, space and time, motion, change, causation, etc., have been taken up by him and shown to be full of contradictions, and, there-upon, the conclusion is drawn that the world as we

1 Dr. Radhakrishnan : IP., Vol. II, p. 524.

2 Gulab Rai : Pashchatya Darshanon ka Itihasa, p. 298 (Eng. Trans. ours).

3 The Nature of Self, p. 251.

4 Appearance And Reality, p. 1,

5 Ibid., p. 9,

understand it is only an appearance, and not reality as such. In fact his analytico-critical or dialectical method seems to be an exact copy of the method employed by Shriharsha, the author of the well-known *Khandanakhandakhadya*, who also took up the Nyaya-Vaisheshika categories one by one and showed that they were all self-contradictory and hence incapable of describing the nature of Reality as it is. Shankara, of course, did not develop a methodical technique of the type of one employed by Bradley or his Indian predecessor, viz., Shriharsha; nevertheless it cannot be said that he has had no recourse to arguments to prove the unreality of the world. What arguments he has advanced to show that the world is unreal we have already seen in chapter V, and we may say that one of these arguments, viz., that the nature of the world cannot be definitely described as this or that (*svarupenanupakhyatvat*) is, truly speaking, a short formula which contains, in a nut-shell, the very gist of all the arguments employed later on by Shriharsha and others in India and by Bradley in the west. Shankara's assertion that cold and hot, etc., along with their causes cannot be established as real objects by means of any source of valid knowledge¹ (including inference or logical thinking) is certainly very much similar to Bradley's denial of reality to the adjectives and substantives alike. There may be difference between their methods of approach, but their conclusions with regard to the unreality of the phenomenal world are almost the same. As to Shankara all *apara vidya* pertains to what is only empirically real, but ultimately unreal, so also according to Bradley 'all the special sciences, physical as well as mental, deal with fictions only....'²

Of course, it is true that Bradley's Absolute or absolute Reality does not seem to be like that of Shankara. For, while the former is a whole or system³ which, though in itself free from all self-contradiction and finitude, somehow owns all the finite and self contradictory appearances and is said to be 'the richer for every discord, and for all diversity which it embraces,'⁴ the latter is viewed as being altogether free from all duality and distinctions of the names and forms which characterize the world of our common experience. It cannot also be denied that the self of Bradley is an appearance only. In Mr. Bradley's own words, "In whatever way

1 SBG. II. 16; see also SBS. II. I. 14 (न तु वस्तुवृत्तेन विकारो नाम कश्चिदस्ति)

2 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 506.

3 Vide Appearance and Reality, p. 127, and 497.

4 Ibid., p. 180.

the self is taken, it will prove to be appearance."¹ At best it is only an element, like so many others, of the 'whole,' which the Absolute Reality of Bradley is.² Shankara's self, on the other hand, is, really speaking, perfectly identical with Brahma, the true Reality. Bradley seeks to approach the Absolute by transcending the finite self, while Shankara, as Prof. Mukerji has rightly urged 'seeks to discover the Absolute, not by transcending the finite self, but by a deeper analysis of the self in us which is erroneously taken to be anything less than the Absolute....'³ Thus, there is a definite difference between their methods of approach to the Absolute.

There is, however, one thing which we should not fail to mark in this connection. And it is Mr. Bradley's rejection of the various meanings in which the self is generally taken to be something real; for, on being subjected to analysis, they are all found to be full of inconsistency and contradiction. By taking 'self' as body, as total contents of experience at any one moment, as average contents of experience, and so on, Bradley has shown that taken in all these senses the self cannot be maintained to be something real, for, the real must be free from all contradictions which the self taken in any of these senses is not. Now, Shankara, we may say, would agree to all this. According to him also the body, the senses, the mental contents, and in fact anything that can be thought out cannot be called the true self. As we have seen before, his 'self', though undeniable, is an indefinable entity, the direct and clear vision of which can only be had by rejecting the notions of body, etc., as notself. So in holding the various concepts of the self as mere appearances or erroneous concepts Bradley does not seem to be saying something which Shankara has not said. It is, therefore, not with regard to his view of the various concepts of self as mere appearances that Bradley may be said to differ with Shankara. In point of fact, there is more of resemblance than difference between them in this respect. Neither Shankara nor Bradley holds the finite self as such to be ultimately real.⁴ Their difference, truly speaking, lies not in their analysis of the various concepts of self, but in the conclusions which they draw from this analysis. While Bradley finding the various meanings of self to be unsatisfactory hastens to the conclusion that the self is as much an appearance as anything else, Shankara, on the other hand, undertakes a deeper analysis of the self, with the result that he arrives at an indubitable conclusion that the self is the only true reality,

1 Appearance and Reality, p. 103.

2 Vide Indian Idealism, p. 21.

3 The Nature of Self, p. 255.

4 Vide Appearance And Reality, p. 497.

the Absolute itself. While Bradley believes that 'fully to realize the existence of the Absolute' or 'to have the specific experience in which it consists' 'is impossible',¹ Shankara, as we have seen, is perfectly certain about this realization.

Bradley would, no doubt, admit our craving for freedom and happiness, etc., to be a fact, but he would not admit us into the perfect freedom and excessive joy of his Absolute. Is our craving, then, only a chimera ? Bradley's assertions at any rate amount to 'Yes.' But however hard and ingeniously he may try to convince us of it, we feel we cannot persuade ourselves to part with this craving which is so deeply ingrained in our nature. And the result is that his philosophy fails to satisfy us. "How can any one be satisfied," as says Dr. Atreya, "with such a philosophy which shows the absurdity of the demands of life themselves ?"²

Descartes tried to prove the existence of God on the ground of the idea of an Infinite and Perfect Being which finite and imperfect human beings have. His argument may or may not prove the existence of God or a Perfect Being different from finite and imperfect human beings; but the fact of our ever-craving for full freedom and perfect happiness undoubtedly seems to show that full freedom and perfect happiness are our own lost paradise which we are always trying to regain. How can a being who is really finite, imperfect and not-free, or only partially free, have an ever-unsatisfied desire for more and more freedom, perfection and joy ? As finite human beings we may never be able to realize such desires of ours; but does not their very presence indicate that they are capable of being somehow realized ? The space inside a jar is, of course, finite and cannot as such be identical with the ubiquitous space; but is it not the same as the latter when the jar is broken ? Bradley himself, it appears, is not opposed to such a possibility. What he is really opposed to is the proposal 'to term the Absolute 'self' and 'the claim of the individual, as such, to perfection',³ and, probably, not the possibility of its ultimate identity with the Absolute. And that it is so seems to be indicated by his assertions that "In order to reach the idea of the Absolute our finite selves must suffer so much addition and so much subtraction that it becomes a grave question whether the result can be covered by the name of 'self' "⁴, and that "to make the self, as such, absolute is, so far as I see, to postulate in the teeth of facts, facts which go to show that the self's character is gone when it ceases to be relative."⁵

1 Appearance And Reality, p. 140.

2 Yogavasishta and Its Phil., pp. 175-76.

3 Appearance And Reality, p. 497. 4 Ibid. 5 Ibid.

It is, however, certain from all this that so far as Bradley himself is concerned he seems to have had no actual experience of his own self's identity with the Absolute. If he could have had it, he could not say that the self is in every way an appearance and that it is for finite human beings impossible to realize the existence of the Absolute. And in this respect Bradley stands in clear contrast with Shankara. No doubt, no finite being as such can be identical with infinite existence, and Shankara never maintains that as such it can ever be so; but if finitude be viewed as an appearance only and not as reality or essential nature of the self, there seems to be nothing wrong in saying that on the removal of this appearance the self is, in fact, identical with itself or the Absolute which it really is. As the space inside a jar is, in point of fact, ever identical with space as such, so is, according to Shankara, every individual self ever essentially identical with the universal Self, the Brahma. What keeps them as different is only one's ignorance of the true nature of one's self. The moment this ignorance is removed the self shines in its own self-identical luminosity, just as the space which was once called 'space within a jar' (ghatakasha) is nothing but the all-pervading space when the jar which made the two seem different no longer exists. We, unlike Bradley, see nothing unreasonable or contradictory in terming the Absolute as 'self', provided that the essential nature of the two be admitted to be the same. If not one's own essential nature what else can rightly be called one's self? Bradley is, no doubt, quite right in maintaining that in order to know the Absolute we have to be the Absolute; but he is certainly wrong when he says that in knowing the Absolute thus 'we should not exist' (p. 140). Of course, 'we should not exist' as finite beings; but that is not the same as thinking that we should not exist at all. On the other hand, our existence as Absolute is decidedly our fuller and absolutely secure existence, the only true existence that there can ever be.

Bradley, however, seems to be fully convinced that Reality is one and one only, and that of the nature of experience itself. In his own words, "There is but one Reality, and its being consists in experience."¹ "The Reality.....must be One.....There is plainly not anything which can fall outside of the Real."² A plurality of Reals is not possible.³ "The Absolute is immediate," "this Absolute is experience," and "in every

1 Appearance and Reality, p. 403.

2 Ibid. p. 213.

3 Vide Ibid, pp. 124-26.

sense it is perfect.”¹ It is “a single and all-inclusive experience,” and ‘its contents are nothing but sentient experience.’² Now, this view of Reality seems to be quite in concord with that of Shankara; as according to Shankara also Brahma, the Ultimate Reality, is not only strictly one but also of the nature of experience or consciousness itself. As in the opinion of Shankara, so also in the opinion of Bradley, as Prof. Mukerji has rightly observed, “.....an unchanging, unobjectifiable, immediate, consciousness must be postulated for explaining the poorest type of knowledge and the facts of experience.”³ “Bradley’s suprarrelational immediate experience in which the experienced and the experience are one”⁴ is, undoubtedly, very much like Shankara’s self or Brahma which is an essential postulate of all experience and experienced facts alike, and in which all distinctions, including the one between the subject and object of knowledge, simply do not exist. The idea of an altogether unknown Reality is as little acceptable to Shankara⁵ as it is to Bradley. With both of them to be (really) is to be experienced.

This resemblance between their views should not, however, be carried too far. For, while Shankara’s Brahma is not a harmonious whole but really a one which knows no distinction whatsoever, Bradley’s Absolute, as we have said before, is essentially a system or whole of finite facts. It is, no doubt, not an appearance itself, but all the same it embraces all the appearances and has, in fact, no other asset except the appearances themselves. As Thilly has put it, “...it is the unity in which all things coming together are transmuted, in which they are changed all alike, though not changed equally....Error, ugliness, and evil are transmuted and absorbed in it. They are all owned by and all essentially contribute to the wealth of the Absolute.”⁶ Bradley’s Absolute, like that of Hegel, is thus similar to the Ishvara of Shankara and not to his Highest Brahma which, though not nothing and ‘out of all connections with our finite experiences’,⁷ is, undoubtedly, something indeterminate and indefinable and, as such, different from a system or whole of constituent parts. “From the stricter point of view of Shankara”, as Prof. Radhakrishnan has rightly observed, “even harmonious truth is not reality. We cannot say that reality is a harmony, for the latter means a number of parts interrelated in a whole. This distinction of parts and

1 Appearance And Reality, p. 213.

2 Ibid. p. 129.

3 The Nature of Self, p. 251.

4 Ibid.

SB. Prashna Up. VI. 2 (वस्तुतत्त्वं भवति किञ्चिन्न ज्ञायते इति चानुपपन्नं)

A History of Phil., p. 506.

7 The Nature of Self, p. 252.

whole is an empirical one, which we are attributing to the transcendental reality. Truth, as harmony, requires us to postulate an absolute experience of Ishvra, which includes all finite subjects in a systematic unity. Shankara holds that as the unity we assume is an unintelligible one, it has also the mark of appearance or unreality."¹ According to Bradley himself 'a relational way of thought must give us appearance and not truth.' But is it not a relational way of thinking to view the Absolute as a harmonious whole of parts ?

Either the relational way of thinking does not give us appearance only or the view of Reality as a harmonious whole must itself be one of appearance. But, if the first alternative is accepted, Bradley's view that the world is only an appearance and not Reality gets considerably compromised; and in case the second alternative is given preference to the first, Bradley will be required to revise his conception of Reality as being a harmonious whole. In fact, in his anxiety to accomodate what he has called appearances in his Reality itself, by viewing it as a harmony of finite and diverse elements, Bradley forgets that in so doing he is virtually sacrificing the consistency of his logic which he has otherwise so ruthlessly employed in showing the unreality of the world as it is commonly understood. Shankara, on the other hand, pursues his logic to its end, and has no hesitation in pronouncing all duality and distinctions as being merely empirical existence, and, as such, not known to his Brahma, the Ultimate Reality. "For him," as says Prof. Radhakrishnan, "knowledge is so vital and error so fatal that he will not admit anything as true unless it stands the scrutiny of logic."² Of course, he does not employ logic beyond its proper limits, but within its limits he does not fight shy of following its verdict, no matter howsoever much it may vary from the commonly cherished beliefs.

So far as the question of having the direct knowledge of ultimate Reality is concerned, Shankara would by no means accept the efficiency of discursive thought or logical thinking as a means of it. And it is a stand which finds sufficient support in the view of Mr. Bradley himself. As according to Shankara so also according to Bradley the very nature of thought is such as it cannot comprehend the absolute Reality as such. Thought by its very nature 'appears to demand an Other.'³ It ".....is relational and discursive, and, if it ceases to be this, it commits suicide."⁴ But the absolute Reality as such cannot allow any 'Other' to stand beside

1 IP. Vol. II, pp. 525-26.

3 Appearance And Reality, p. 155.

2 IP., p. 526.

4 Ibid. p. 150.

itself. And if it allows one, it ceases to be absolute. So Bradley has rightly admitted that "...thought cannot satisfy us as to reality's falling wholly within its limits."¹ Of course, Bradley has not totally denied 'that reality is an object of thought'; but he has certainly denied "that it is barely and merely so."² He is of definite opinion that "in the proper sense of thought, thought and fact are not the same," and that "if their identity is worked out, thought ends in a reality which swallows up its character."³ According to him in that "...mode of apprehension, which is quite identical with reality, surely predicate and subject, and subject and object, and in short the whole relational form, must be merged."⁴ In it thought gets "...so transformed that to go on calling it thought seems indefensible."⁵ "Thought's relational content can never be the same as the subject, either as that subject appears or as it really is. The reality that is presented is taken up by thought in a form not adequate to its nature....."⁶ All these assertions of Mr. Bradley go to show that he, like Shankara, did not believe in the capacity of thought as such to know reality as it is. Thought cannot work without segregating the 'what' from the 'that', the predicate from the subject. It essentially dissects a whole situation into its parts and so fails to catch the reality which, according to Bradley, is a unified whole, a 'that-what,' and not a 'that' which is 'what.' Shankara, of course, has not argued out his point in the same manner. According to him thought cannot grasp Reality because it, like perception on which it is primarily based, deals with things which are finite in nature and possess attributes such as colour, etc., and hence cannot deal with the ultimate Reality, the Brahma, which is infinite and formless.⁷ But this difference between their arguments does not affect their conclusions. Both ultimately come to agree that the Absolute Reality as such cannot truly be grasped by thought as such. This, however, does not mean that they have discredited thought altogether. Its serviceableness in its proper spheres, and to its due extent even in the sphere of the knowledge of Reality, has been fully recognized by both of them.

We have seen in chapter III that Shankara is not, truly speaking, an agnostic. No doubt, he has denied the possibility of the knowledge

1 Appearance And Reality, p. 154.

2 Ibid., p. 149.

3 Ibid., p. 152.

4 Ibid., p. 152

5 Ibid., p. 152.

6 Ibid., p. 158.

7 Vide SBS. II 1, 6; II. 1. 11 (रूपाद्यभावात्.....नानुमानादीनाम्)

of Brahma, or our true Self, as an object of sense-perception or thought. But he never says that Brahma is altogether unknown. On the other hand he has emphatically maintained not only that we all have in a way a vague and indefinite knowledge of it always, but also that one who makes a sincere effort to know it can have a most direct and certain knowledge of it here and now. Call it intuition, vision, immediate experience, or pure cognition, or by any other name, it has been indubitably recognized as an infallible source of seeing the ultimate Reality from within it. It is with him a way of knowing it by being or experiencing it. Bradley also, we find, speaks of the experience of his absolute Reality or Absolute. That this Absolute, according to him, is of the nature of experience we have already seen. Now it may be added that he unhesitatingly holds the idea of this 'all-inclusive and supra-relational experience' to be 'intelligible and positive.'¹ Of course, he has told us that we 'cannot understand its detail'²; but thereby he does not mean that we are altogether unable to know its main character. "What is impossible," he says, "is to construct absolute life in its detail, to have the specific experience in which it consists. But to gain an idea of its main features.....is a different endeavour. And it is a task, so far as I see, in which we may succeed. For these main features, to some extent, are within our own experience.....And surely no more than this is wanted for a knowledge of the Absolute."³

As to the source of such knowledge Bradley says: "My way of contact with Reality is through a limited aperture. For I cannot get at it directly except through the felt 'this'.....Everything beyond, though not less real, is an expansion of the common essence which we feel burningly in this one focus. And so, in the end, to know the Universe, we must fall back upon our personal experience and sensation."⁴ Thus it seems to be a well-considered conviction of Mr. Bradley that if Reality can ever be known directly, it can be known only through our direct experience of it. In fact, as with Shankara it is the 'being' or existence (satta) of Brahma itself which appears in the form of the being of all things that are known or judged to be there, so also with Bradley the ultimate subject of every judgement is the Reality itself. And just as Shankara's Brahma is neither this nor that finite object or attribute experienced, so also Bradley's Absolute always goes beyond every predicate of it.

1 Appearance And Reality, p. 494.

3 Ibid. p. 140.

2 Ibid.

4 Ibid. p. 229.

Thus, the fact of there being a close resemblance between the views of Shankara and Bradley pertaining to the knowledge of ultimate Reality cannot, so far as it goes, rightly be questioned. But this resemblance, strictly speaking, does not seem to go very far. Bradley, it seems, knows no experience other than our common-place psychical experiences. In his experience of Reality, in the words of Prof. Thilly, "we can discover nothing.....that is not either feeling or thought or will or emotion or something else of the kind."¹ No doubt, according to him, "...we have real knowledge of the Absolute, positive knowledge built on experience"²; but this knowledge is not the knowledge of the Absolute as a whole. His Absolute being a sort of harmonious conglomeration of innumerable finites which it also transcends, "...is not known, and never can be known, in all its detail. It is not known, and it never, as a whole, can be known, in such a sense that knowledge would be the same as experience or reality."³ He can, therefore, at best be said to have only got 'in ordinary human experience a hint of the meaning of ultimate reality,'⁴ and to have only caught a glimpse into its nature but by no means to have realized it in its completeness. For in his finite experience the Absolute is only imperfectly present. Bradley may, no doubt, say that his "finite experience never in any of its forms is shut in by a wall," and that in his "first immediate experience the whole Reality is present" and also that "a finite experience already partially is the universe"⁵; but that would not at all affect our estimate of his experience.

Either Bradley's experience is finite or infinite. If it is finite, it is not, on his own view, the same as the Absolute experience; and if it is infinite, it must include and absorb, according to his own conception of the Absolute, all the finite experiences, if not exactly as such, at least in a transmuted form. But in the first case Bradley cannot claim to have known the Reality as it in itself is or knows itself to be, while in the second case either his claim to it will be falsified by his doubtless failure to describe the finite experiences of other persons or he would have to admit that the absolute experience does not retain the finite experiences in any form whatsoever. The first alternative shows that whatever knowledge . Bradley may claim to have had of the

1 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 506.

2 Ibid., p. 505.

3 Ibid., p. 507.

4 Ibid., p. 505.

5 Quoted by Thilly in his 'A History of Phil., on p. 505.

Absolute is only conjectural and not certain, while the second one goes against his conception of Reality as a harmonious whole. But neither of these conclusions is favourable to his philosophy of the Absolute. Shankara's knowledge of Brahma, on the other hand, is not conjectural. He does not construct it by transforming and enlarging his finite psychical experiences themselves, but seems to have had a direct and most certain experience of it. So, while Bradley's view of his Absolute is merely a hypothesis, Shankara's view of Brahma is an actually experienced fact or a hypothesis verified. And we know that it is only an adequately verified hypothesis which can rightly be called knowledge.

*A Critical and Comparative Appreciation
of Shankara's Brahmanavada*

‘बुद्धिर्हि नः प्रमाणं सदसतोऽप्यथात्म्यावगमे’—शंकर (कठ उप. भा. ६.१२)

“Why there are appearances, and why appearances of such various kinds, are questions not to be answered.” (Bradley)

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Chapter II.

A CRITICAL AND COMPARATIVE APPRECIATION OF SHANKARA'S BRAHMAVADA

I Shankara's Brahmadada, not mere mysticism

In chapter III it was remarked that Shankara's Brahmadada is not mere mysticism; and our subsequent account of it, we believe, has gone a long way to substantiate that remark. But in view of the fact that Shankara's denial of direct knowledge of Reality by means of thought or reasoning alone, accompanied by his emphasis on the desirability of having an immediate experience of it, has sometimes made people think that he is a mystic only, it seems to be desirable to devote some more space to the consideration of this topic exclusively.

In the words of Prof. M. N. Sircar, "The mystic is a great adventurer. He discards the conventional way of thinking about truth, and emptying himself thoroughly of notions and ideas, waits for the kindly light. He makes himself free from the intimations of the senses, the ideas of reason, to receive the wonders of life in silence."¹ Pure mysticism, we may say, knows no logic. But Shankara, it may be rightly urged, is a master-logician, and his Brahmadada, 'a system of great speculative daring and logical subtlety'², and 'a piece of philosophical argumentation' which 'undoubtedly occupies a high rank'³. While a mystic 'frankly takes leave of intelligibility'⁴, Shankara, we find, has taken great pains to make himself intelligible both to his opponents and willing readers alike.

It cannot, of course, be denied that Shankara has held 'anubhava' or 'aparokshanubhuti' (immediate experience) to be the only means of

1 Hindu Mysticism, p. 1.

2 Prof. Radhakrishnan, IP., Vol. II, p. 445

3 Thibaut's Intro. to Vedanta-sutras, p. XV.

4 Rashdall : The Theory of Good and Evil, Vol. II, p. 69.

direct and indubitable knowledge of Brahma or Absolute Reality; but that alone is not enough to make a mystic of him. We may rightly hold perception to be the only means of our direct knowledge of the external world, but we do not become mystics on that account, and that simply because we do not deny to other means of valid knowledge, inference, etc., their due claims and places in the field of our knowledge both external and internal. A mystic, no doubt, is one who holds 'direct awareness' as the only means of knowing reality; but whosoever holds direct awareness as the only means of the direct knowledge of reality cannot, on that ground, be said to be a mystic. The simple conversion of an 'A' proposition is not always logically sound. What really entitles us to view a person as a mystic is his dogmatic denial of the usefulness of reasoning, etc., as means of the knowledge of ultimate or true reality, and not merely his assertion that immediate experience alone can give us a direct knowledge of this reality as such. And Shankara for one, we find, has duly recognized the value of thinking and reasoning not only for practical purposes of life but also as means of Self-realization or direct vision of ultimate Reality itself. It is, therefore, not proper to dub him as a mystic.

It is, undoubtedly, true that Shankara, at places, seems to have disparaged reasoning. For example, in his commentary on Brahma-sutra, II. 1. 11, he says : "We see how arguments which some clever men had excogitated with great pains are shown, by people still more ingenious, to be fallacious, and how the arguments of latter again are refuted in their turn by other men; so that on account of the diversity of men's opinions, it is impossible to accept mere reasoning as having a sure foundation"¹. But passages like this give us only a partial and one-sided view of his Brahmavada. For, at other places, we find Shankara himself speaking about reasoning and understanding very favourably, so much so that in his commentary on the Katha Upanishad he has, at one place, even gone to the length of saying that 'in understanding what is really right or wrong, real or unreal, the intellect is undoubtedly a valid means of knowledge with us'². Even in respect of ascertaining the correct meaning of scriptures the propriety and usefulness of thinking or reflecting has been duly recognized by him³. Not only this, he has even thought it to

1 SBS. II. 1. 11 (Thibaut's Trans.); see also II. 1. 6, and SB. Katha Up. I. 2. 9.

2 SB. Katha Up. VI 12 (बुद्धिर्हि नः प्रमाणं सदसतोर्थात्मावगमे);

SBG II. 16 (सदसती बुद्धितन्त्रे)

3 SB. Br. Up. III. 9. 7 (तस्माद्युक्तं वेदवाक्यनिर्णयाय विचारयितुं)

be desirable for an aspirant after true knowledge to have repeated practice in argumentation, of course, in conformity with the scriptures.¹ A view, according to him, deserves to be entertained only when it is backed by some proof². While answering the question, 'can the ultimate non-duality be grasped through scriptures only or can it also be grasped by means of reasoning?', it has been explicitly maintained by him that 'it can be known through reasoning' as well³.

If Shankara has spoken against reasoning, it is not against reasoning as such but against reasoning for the sake of reasoning. According to him it is that reasoning or inference which contradicts perceptual or actual experience that does not deserve to be treated as a means of valid knowledge.⁴ In the words of Prof. A. C. Mukerji, "What is condemned..... is not any and every type of reasoned knowledge, but purposeless dry hair-splitting (shushkatarka or kutarka) which leads to no definite conclusion".⁵ The serviceableness of sound reasoning, like that of a faithful servant, has willingly been recognized by Shankara⁶, who has openly admitted that in some cases at least reasoning is well-founded⁷. The very fact that he has himself employed reasoning so extensively and frequently not only in criticizing the views of his opponents but also while trying to convince his reader about the validity of his own views, is a clear evidence of his great regard for reason. Had Shankara no faith in the efficacy of reasoning as such, he could not have taken all this trouble of indulging in acute thinking. No mystic, I think, would ever do it. He would either passively wait for the vision of divine or spiritual light or would at best indulge in occult practices to win the hidden wonders of human life, and would also recommend the same course to others who might approach him for guidance in the matter concerned. If he would preach or say anything to them, it would all be dogmatic in spirit. But Shankara and his Brahmvada are quite different in nature. There is perhaps hardly any person who has gone through his works, especially the commentaries, with open eyes and mind, and has not been considerably impressed with the exuberance of subtle

1 SBS. IV. 1 2 (इष्टव्यः युक्त्याभ्यासः)

2 SBS. II. 3. 50 (उपपत्त्या तु कथाचिद्व्यवस्थोच्येत्)

3 SB. Mand. Up. Karika, III. 1 (.... शक्यते तर्केणापि ज्ञातुम्)

4 SB. Br. Up. II. 1. 20; IV. 3. 6 (प्रत्यक्षविरोधे अनुमानस्याप्रामाण्यात्)

5 The Nature of Self, p. 346.

6 SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 7; IV. 5. 6.

7 SBS. II. 1. 11 (क्वचिद्विषय तर्कस्य प्रतिष्ठितत्वमुपलक्षते)

reasoning present in them. At places he seems to have put such a great premium on clear thinking and impartial observation that he appears to be playing the part of a perfect rationalist openly.

Thus, in view of Shankara's extensive use of reasoning and thought, the bare fact that he has regarded the intuitive or direct experience of the true nature of one's Self or Brahma as the culmination of all knowledge does not warrant us to call him a mystic in the right sense of this word. Intuition or direct experience may only be said to be a means of knowledge with him, and not to be a criterion either of reality or of the truth of one's knowledge thereof. As we have seen before, the truth of one's knowledge, according to him, consists in its conformity to facts as they really are, while the criterion of the reality of a thing is said to be its self-existence or permanence, or non-contradiction by any knowledge whatsoever¹. And the formulation of such criteria of true knowledge and reality is also, we may add, not the work of a mystic whose only resort is, strictly speaking, intuitive experience itself. In point of fact the intuitive experience which is the be-all and end-all of a mystic knows no thinking or logic. And the moment an attempt is made to rationalize or to make it intelligible a trans-intuitive or non-mystical factor creeps into it, and, there-upon, the mystic ceases to be a mystic. As Prof. M. N. Sircar has rightly said, ".....there may be such a thing as the logic of mysticism, but the mystic soul is not consciously aware of it. The logic of mysticism is not mysticism"².

As to Shankara's denial of reason's efficiency to give us direct and certain knowledge of the Ultimate Reality or Brahma it may simply be added that it certainly seems to be quite in keeping with the nature of reason as we know it. When reason cannot give us direct knowledge of even finite objects of our every-day sense-perception, how can it give us such knowledge of the infinite reality which is beyond even sense-perception³, the very basis of reasoning itself ? To maintain that reason cannot give us direct knowledge is rightly to recognize its limitations, and hence to call a spade a spade. It is exactly like saying that we cannot see sound or hear colour. But to say so does not mean to deny the worth of efficacy of the sense-organs of seeing and hearing in their own proper spheres. Shankara, therefore, we conclude, is, truly speaking, far from being a mystic because reason occupies a very significant place in his Brahmanvada and gets all its due from him.

1 SBS. II. 1. 11, and SB. Br. Up. IV. 3. 7.

2 Hindu Mysticism, p. 1.

3 SBS, II. 1. 11,

II Shankara's Brahnavada, a sincere philosophical attempt

Closely connected with the topic we have just discussed is the question 'whether Shankara's Brahnavada should or should not be viewed as philosophy proper ?' And what is sometimes deemed to be unphilosophical in it is Shankara's frequent appeal to the authority of the sacred scriptures. Philosophy, it is generally believed, should be through and through speculative and based on reasoning or articulate argumentation and should allow no place to faith in it. Faith, it is believed, has got a place in religion or theology only. It should therefore be kept apart from all genuine attempts at philosophizing. True philosophy, according to the current belief in the West, is one which appeals to the mind and never to the heart at all.

That Shankara has at places referred to what has been maintained in the sacred scriptures cannot but be admitted. But that is certainly not enough and proper ground to discredit his Brahnavada as being unphilosophical. True philosophy, we think, cannot and should not afford to ignore the consideration of any kind of experience whatsoever. Rightly speaking, it is not only the experience of the men in the street and of waking life, but other experiences also, such as the so-called mystic experiences and revelations and the experiences of sound-sleep and dream-states, which should claim a true philosopher's consideration. To restrict philosophy to this or that type of experience and to overlook other types is to deprive it of its claim to be a study of Reality or experience as a whole.

It is, however, unfortunate and unjustifiable too that western thinkers in general have restricted their philosophy to the common experiences of waking life and have not been alive especially to the experience of sound-sleep¹ and to the uncommon experiences of specially gifted persons, be they the so-called mystics, or sages or saints or seers. "Any system of thought", as says Prof. M. N. Sircar, "must be poor if it denies and rejects the felicitous experiences received in the soul."² The experiences of the sages and other such persons really deserve a greater consideration than even the common experiences of men, simply because they are the experiences of persons who may be definitely said to be better qualified to peep deeper into the inner nature of things than the average

1 (As says Prof. Mukerji "Western metaphysics is one-sided, since its attention is confined to the waking state alone....."—The Nature of Self, p. 28).

2 Hindu Mysticism, p. 7.

man whose mind remains generally ruffled on account of his desires and engagements of diverse sorts. Moreover, the verdicts of those persons who in addition to sharing with the average man his every-day experiences have also certain other experiences of a different nature which they consciously and clearly judge to be higher and truer than the former, are justly more authoritative and reliable than those of the common man who knows only one type of experience and is therefore really not in a position to assess the proper comparative worth of the two types of experiences—the common ones and those which it is a prerogative of the specially qualified persons alone to have.

So, if Shankara attaches due importance to the scriptural assertions which are the expressions of the immediate experiences of the sages and seers of great antiquity and insight, and if he asks the aspirants after transcendental knowledge to pin their faith to them, he does not really go beyond the proper bounds of genuine philosophy which should be, as its etymological meaning requires, characterized by a whole-hearted and incessant love for knowledge and should, as such, tap at all doors which may possibly lead it into the temple of its goddess.

Shankara, as we have already maintained in chapter II, is not a blind follower of any texts whatsoever. His faith in the sacred scriptures, we may say, is rational faith; for it is founded on his conviction of their truths. And that it is so is evident from his own assertions such as that even the scriptures cannot bring home to us what is contradictory¹, and that even if hundreds of scriptures say that fire is cold or devoid of light they cannot be treated as saying something valid². It is only initial, and not final, faith which Shankara would approve of and recommend to others as well. A faith that does not have its fruition or fulfilment in the arousal of true knowledge and in the attainment of perfect freedom and bliss consequent there-upon here and now, is not to him a correct and commendable type of faith.

That Shankara's faith is not incompatible with reason is adequately evident from his own commentaries themselves, which may more justly be described as a happy product of profound insight, enlightened reasoning and impartial observation rather than as dogmatic assertions of a narrow-minded man. His criticism of other systems of thought is so clear and convincing and his subtle logic so free from flaws that his works can very well be placed along with any philosophical work of first rank

1 SBS. II. 1. 27.

2 SBG. XVIII, 66.

in the west. And it is for considerations like this that his Brahmvada has been viewed by great scholars like Prof. Radhakrishnan as 'a great example of a purely philosophical scheme.'¹

Knowledge and the methods of acquiring knowledge are really two different things. The true object of Philosophy is knowledge, and not the methods of its acquisition. And one who really seeks knowledge should not be prejudicial to this or that method. But this the western thinkers generally forget when they wed philosophy to their speculative method exclusively, and make it demand a clear-cut proof of whatever is believed. They may, however, be asked : 'Is there nothing which does not need a proof, or which we do not believe without an articulate proof ?' "What proof, for example, can we give or do we need of moral consciousness or of freedom of action which are facts of our immediate experience ?"²

To see through the limitations of intellect or reason and to employ a method other than the analytico-critical method is not to cease to be a philosopher. Even western thinkers of outstanding eminence, like Bergson, have rightly recognized the limitations of intellect or discursive thinking. What wonder is it then if Shankara having realized the same, especially in matters transcendental, has recourse to scriptures, or appeals to his own immediate and indubitable experience ? The fact is that while in the west greater importance is attached to the method than to the object of philosophy, in India, it is the object of philosophy, and not its method, that really matters. That is why philosophy in India has been called 'darshana' which, in the words of Prof. Radhakrishnan, primarily means "a spiritual perception, a whole view revealed to the soul sense"³. And according to Shankara this 'darshana' or spiritual perception of the ultimate Reality or Brahma is, as we have seen, possible only through a conjoint persistent and sincere effort of one's heart and mind both. Thus in recognizing the due parts which heart and mind both play in the direct darshana or vision of the Ultimate Truth, and this direct vision as the highest goal of human life, Shankara has not only recognized the indispensability of morally pure life for it, but has also concurrently conceded the claims of intellect and intuition both. So, in view of his ardent love for the knowledge of Ultimate Reality characterized by the consi-

1 Radhakrishnan : IP. Vol. II, p. 445.

2 The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Phil., p. 27.

3 Dr. Radhakrishnan : IP. Vol. I, p. 44.

deration of all types of human experiences, inclusive of the so-called mystic experiences and the experiences of sound-sleep, and by the employment of all available sources of knowledge in their proper places, we feel no hesitation in saying with Paul Deussen that Shankara's Brahmvada is "not merely theological, but also in the highest degree philosophical."¹

III Modern science in its bearing on Brahmvada

While undertaking to write something about 'modern science in its bearing on Brahmvada', we certainly do not mean to suggest that Shankara was a scientist; nor is it our intention to maintain that the credit of making so many scientific discoveries does not really go to the modern scientists. Our main object in dwelling upon this topic is simply to see what may be called a happy coincidence between the views of a philosopher of the eighth or ninth century (A. D.) and those of the most modern scientists. And this attempt of ours, we believe, will not only serve the purpose of rendering our notions of Shankara's Brahmvada clearer but will also lend some support to it.

Let us first take up Einstein's theory of Relativity and see what consequences of philosophical significance are implied by it. Prior to the publication of Einstein's first paper bearing on the theory of Relativity, in 1905, People "..... had thought of space as something around us, and of time as something that flowed past us, or even through us. The two seemed to be in every way fundamentally different. We can retrace our steps in space, but never in time; we can move quickly, or slowly, or not at all, in space as we choose, but no one can regulate the rate of flow of time—it rolls on at the same even uncontrollable rate for all of us. Yet Einstein's first result, as interpreted by Minkowski four years later, involved the amazing conclusion that nature knew nothing of this."² To put it "in Minkowski's words: "Space and time separately have vanished into the merest shadows, and only a sort of combination of the two preserves any reality."³ It is therefore believed that "the essence of the theory of relativity is that nature knows nothing of these divisions of the continuum into space and time."⁴ Thus, space and time which were formerly thought to be something absolutely real have now, in the light of the theory of relativity, come to be viewed as something merely rela-

1 Paul Deussen : The System of the Vedanta, p. 96.

2 James Jeans : The Mysterious Universe, p. 121.

3 Quoted in The Mysterious Universe, p. 127.

4 James Jeans : Physics and Philosophy, p. 199.

tive. "The physical theory of relativity now indicates—to a high degree of possibility—that space and time do not exist separately in their own right, but are subjective selections from a wide space-time unity." Now "the past and future are created species of time which we consciously but wrongly transfer to the eternal essence. We say 'was', 'is', 'will be', but the truth is that 'is' can alone properly be used."¹ According to the theory of relativity time has now been reduced merely to a fourth dimension of space "in which three dimensions of ordinary space are welded on to one dimension of time."² And just as a cricket ball in a cricket ground, to use an illustration employed by Sir James Jeans, knows nothing of the directions 'forward', 'backward', 'left-to-right' of the bowler, batsman and the umpire respectively, similarly nature as such, it is said, is also not alive to the distinctions of time and space. The space and time of our every-day experience may thus be said to have nothing corresponding to them in the reality of a physicist of Einstein's views. They may, no doubt, be preserved as mere appearances but not as constituting the essence of reality. And if space and time turn out to be mere appearances of reality, then everything else which is characterized by them, it follows, has also got to be viewed likewise. The distinction between appearance and reality thus seems to be a necessary corollary of the theory of relativity. In the words of Sir James Jeans "... ..the material world..... constitutes the whole world of appearance, but not the whole world of reality, we may picture the world or reality as a deep-flowing stream; the world of appearance is its surface below which we cannot see."³

In his article 'A Remark about the relationship between Relativity theory and Idealistic Philosophy'⁴, Prof. Kurt Godel also has given expression to a similar view. According to him the discovery of the 'relativity of simultaneity'—which, briefly speaking, aims at establishing that two events which appear as simultaneous to one observer may be declared to be non-simultaneous by another observer (living in a different world) entitled to an equal claim to correctness—may be said to have deprived simultaneity of its objective meaning in the strict sense.

The notions of time and change stand or fall together. Time is as unintelligible without change as change is without time. So a declara-

1 *Mysterious Universe*, pp. 144—45.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

3 *Physics and Philosophy*, p. 193.

4 *Albert Einstein : Philosopher-scientist*, pp. 557—562.

tion of the relativity of simultaneity, being tantamount to a denial of objective time, goes to favour the view that change is also an appearance—something that holds good of the world of common-sense and not of Reality as such. In Kurt Godel's words, "Change becomes possible only through the lapse of time. The existence of an objective lapse of time, however, means (or, at least, is equivalent to the fact) that reality consists of an infinity of layers of 'now' which come into existence successively. But, if simultaneity is something relative....., reality cannot be split up into such layers in an objectively determined way. Each observer has his own set of 'nows', and none of these various systems of layers can claim the prerogative of representing the objective lapse of time."¹ Thus in the relativity of time "one obtains an unequivocal proof for the view of those philosophers who.....deny the objectivity of change and consider change as an illusion or an appearance due to our special mode of perception."²

An advocate of the theory of relativity, however, does not deny the fact of the common experience of space and time. From the point of view of our every-day practical life space and time are as well recognized by him as by any one of us. It is only from the scientific stand-point, or from the point of view of reality as he understands it, that he finds and declares them to be only appearances or our own modes of perceiving things. "Einstein," in the words of Prof. Henry Margenau, "in common with practically all scientists, assumes the existence of an external world, an objective world, i. e., one that is largely independent of the human observer."³ But at the same time he definitely recognizes a difference between "the observer's perception of that external world and our notions of it."⁴ What has been maintained by him is simply this that "sense perception only gives information of this external world or of physical reality indirectly" and that "we can only grasp the latter by speculative means."⁵ Relativity in the sense of variance is conferred only "upon the domain of immediate observations,"⁶ and not upon their 'basic description' or physical laws, the invariance of which is believed to be required by the very postulate of the objectivity of the world.⁷ This clearly shows that the scientists like Albert Einstein look at the world from two points of view—the point of view of the layman and the point of view of one who has the discerning eye of a scientist.

1 Albert Einstein, p. 558.

2 Ibid., p. 557.

3 'Einstein's Conception of Reality,' p. 248 of 'Albert Einstein.'

4 Ibid., p. 249.

5 Ibid., p. 248.

6 Ibid., p. 254.

7 Vide 'Albert Einstein,' pp. 253—54.

Then, Einstein, though speaking of the objective existence as 'knowable in scientific terms', also displays "a certain pathos for the unknown."¹ According to him, as says Prof. Henry Margenau, "... there is something ineffable about the real, something occasionally described as mysterious and aweinspiring."² In Einstein's own words, "...our notions of physical reality can never be final, we must always be ready to change these notions."³ "As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality."⁴ "Relativity teaches that the meaning of objectivity cannot be captured in the external realm of science."⁵ Einstein, it is believed, has left "unanswered the basic metaphysical problem underlying all science."⁶ As a matter of fact this is the attitude of many of the modern scientists. While expressing his opinion about the achievements of science Sir James Jeans has observed that "... everything that has been said, and every conclusion that has been tentatively put forward, is quite frankly speculative and uncertain. We cannot claim to have discovered more than a very faint glimmer of light at the best.....science should leave off making pronouncements: the river of knowledge has too often turned back on itself."⁷ "A mathematical formula can never tell us what a thing is, but only how it behaves."⁸ "The essential fact is simply that all the pictures which science now draws of nature, and which alone seem capable of according with observational facts, are mathematical pictures," and "most scientists would agree that they are nothing more than pictures-fictions if you like, if by fiction you mean that science is not yet in contact with ultimate reality."⁹

Now, this brief, sketchy and general account of the theory of relativity and of its implications of philosophical significance cannot fail to recall to our mind Shankara's clear-cut distinction between his two points of view, empirical and ultimate. From the empirical or practical point of view, as we have seen, our common notions about the external world of space and time are as much safe and secure in the

1 'Einstein's Conception of Reality,' Albert Einstein, p. 218.

2 Ibid., p. 250.

3 Einstein : The World As I see It, p. 60

(quoted in Albert Einstein on p. 218 & p. 250 respectively.)

4 Einstein : Sidelights of Relativity.

5 Albert Einstein, p. 252.

6 'Einstein's Conception of Reality', p. 249 of 'Albert Einstein.'

7 Mysterious Universe, p 188.

8 Ibid, p. 178,

9 Ibid., p. 153.

hands of Shankara as in the hands of a modern scientist. But from the point of view of reality in itself both Shankara and the scientists seem to have no hitch in pronouncing them as being unfaithful to the true nature of reality as such. The theory of relativity seems to confirm his view that the world as we know it does not really exist in Brahma, the Absolute Reality, which, like the reality 'below the surface of appearances of the world of relativity,' knows nothing of the distinction of time and space. In fact, this distinction between appearance and reality, as Sir James Jeans has rightly pointed out, "pervades the history of philosophy. In a famous parable, Plato depicts mankind as chained in a cave in such a way that they can look only on the wall which forms only the back of the cave; they cannot see the busy life outside, but only the shadows—the appearances—which objects moving in the sunshine cast on the walls of the cave. For the captives in the cave the shadows constitute the whole world of appearance—the phenomenal world—while the world of reality lies for ever beyond their ken,"¹ According to the scientists, "...the walls of the cave in which we are imprisoned are space and time; the shadows of reality which we see projected on the walls by the sunshine outside are the material particles which we see moving against a back-ground of space and time, while the reality outside the cave which produces these shadows is outside space and time."²

In his article, 'A Remark About the Relationship Between Relativity Theory And Idealistic Philosophy', Prof. Kurt Godel has observed that in the relativity of time "one obtains an unequivocal proof for the view of those philosophers who.....deny the objectivity of change and consider change as an illusion or an appearance due to our special mode of perception."³ Shankara as well as the scientists, no doubt, do not view the objective world as an illusion in its popular sense, that is, in the sense of being a fanciful or erroneous creation of an individual person's mind only; but there is not the least doubt about his pronouncing it as unreal from the ultimate point of view very much like the scientist who regards the popular conceptions of time and space, or of the spatio-temporal world, as wrong conceptions and thinks his own scientific notions about it to be the only correct notions. Thus in respect of recognizing two points of view, lower and higher, as well as in respect of holding the popular view of the world as erroneous Shankara's Brahmavada may

1 Physics And Philosophy, p. 193.

2 Ibid., p.p. 193—94.

3 Albert Einstein...., p. 557.

very well be said to find its parallel in the relativist's position which, though recognizing the ordinary view of space and time, definitely posits an existence in which space and time as such do not really exist.

The scientist's general assertions that 'we are not yet in contact with ultimate reality,' that 'a mathematical formula can never tell us what a thing is' and that 'everything that has been said and every conclusion that has been tentatively put forward, is quite frankly speculative and uncertain...', sound very much like the 'neti, neti' phrase of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and its due endorsement by Shankara. Shankara's Ultimate Reality or Brahma, we have seen, beggars all description. No straining of eyes, no stretching of imagination and no flight of mind can ever prove equal to the task of knowing it. This, however, does not mean that a practically serviceable knowledge of the empirical world is also denied thereby. Neither Shankara nor science questions such knowledge. What is denied is not the knowledge of appearances but the knowledge of the essential nature of the ultimate Reality as such. There is, however, an important point of difference between Shankara and science here. While science, even at its most advanced stage, knows no method other than that of speculation, Shankara, on the other hand, seems to be in the know of a way to the inner apartments of the mansion of Reality.

Just as we are told by the advocates of the theory of relativity that 'nature is not alive to the distinctions of time and space' and that the 'eternal essence of reality does not admit of 'was' and 'will be' but is such as 'is' alone can properly be used for it, so also Shankara has held his Brahma or Ultimate Reality to be free from all distinctions of time and space (dikkaladyaparamrishta) and to be of the nature of an eternal 'is.' Just as according to Einstein, as Prof. Henry Margenau has said, the theory of Relativity is "restricted to the cognitive field",¹ and is not applicable to the domain of reality as it is, or to the physical laws which describe it, similarly, it may be said, Shankara has restricted all names and forms to the empirical world and has denied their applicability to his Brahma, the Absolute. There is, thus, a fairly good affinity between what Einstein's theory of Relativity stands for or implies and what Shankara has placed before us.

In addition to the Theory of Relativity there is another scientific theory which also seems to lend some support to Shankara's Brahmvada.

1 Albert Einstein, p. 289.

And it is the well-known Quantum-theory, "which," in the words of Sir James Jeans, "forms one of the great dominating principles of modern physics."¹ Let us turn to it and see what it is and what support Shankara's Brahnavada gets from it. To begin with, it may be stated that in the hands of Max Planck of Berlin this theory "in its earliest form hardly went beyond suggesting that the course of nature proceeded by tiny jumps and jerks, like the hands of a clock."² But "Einstein shewed in 1917 that the theory founded by Planck...appeared to dethrone the law of causation from the position it had hitherto held as guiding the course of the natural world. The old science had confidently proclaimed that nature could follow only one road, the road which was mapped out from the beginning of time to its end by the continuous chain of cause and effect; state A was inevitably succeeded by state B. So far the new science has only been able to say that state A may be followed by state B or C or D or by innumerable other states. It can, it is true, say that B is more likely than C, C than D, and so on; it can even specify the relative probabilities of states B, C and D. But, just because it has to speak in terms of probabilities, it cannot predict with certainty which state will follow which; there is a matter which lies on the knees of the gods—whatever gods there be."³

A consistent scheme of nature, it is now believed, requires that a principle of indeterminacy should be admitted to be operating in some way in it. In the words of Sir James Jeans, "Professor Heisenberg has shewn that the concepts of the modern Quantum theory involve what he calls 'a principle of indeterminacy.' We have long thought of the workings of nature as exemplifying the acme of precision....yet Heisenberg now makes it appear that nature abhors accuracy and precision above all things."⁴ To illustrate this principle several phenomena of nature's have been referred to, and it has been shewn that they cannot be accounted for except by positing some such thing as indeterminacy in the course of nature. "Radiation," for instance, it has been maintained, "can appear now as waves and now as particles,.....electrons and protons, the fundamental units of which all matter is composed, can also appear now as particles and now as waves."⁵ The fact that "certain phenomena, radiation and gravitation in particular, defied all attempts at a purely mechanical explanation",⁶ it is believed, is a clear indication of there being a factor of indeterminacy in nature.

1 The Mysterious Universe, p. 31. 2 Ibid., pp. 31—32. 3 Ibid., p. 32.

4 Ibid., p. 38.

5 Ibid., p. 54.

6 Ibid., p. 31.

Now, "If the principle of indeterminacy," says Mr. J. W. N. Sullivan, "comes to be definitely established, it will obviously have important philosophic consequences. It will make it easier to believe that our intuition of free-will is not an illusion."¹ No doubt, as long as a definite proof of there being indeterminacy in nature is not forthcoming we cannot go to the length of saying that our belief in free-will has been scientifically established; but this much at least can very well be said that the scientific evidence which has so far been available has already gone a long way in the direction of confirming our belief in some such thing as free-will. Moreover, the weight of opinions of many a metaphysician and moral philosopher is undoubtedly on the side of such a belief. All the same it cannot yet be maintained that opinion on this important issue is not divided. But whichever side we may feel inclined to take, we cannot deny that Shankara has definitely recognized free-will as one of the factors that determine human behaviour. Not only this, he may also be said to have recognized some sort of indeterminacy in nature itself, in so far as he has incorporated, of course following the view of Bhagavadgita, Daiva (a divine being or god) also in the list of five-fold causes of all actions,² and to make actions or matter lie 'on the knees of gods', to adopt Sir James Jeans' expression, is to believe in the principle of indeterminacy.

Besides this, the Quantum theory or the principle of indeterminacy may also be said to have lent some support to Shankara's Brahmvada in another important respect as well, which, we may say, is the recognition of consciousness in some form as constituting the very essence of nature. "Amongst the new properties," as says Prof. Sullivan, "with which we propose to dower the atom, we shall probably have to include a rudimentary form of consciousness. Perhaps there is a hint of this in the modern doctrine that the atom manifests something like free-will."³

As a matter of fact "the small hard atoms" of olden days "have now departed from science",⁴ and have left in their place something that may be, more correctly speaking, spoken of as mental or thought-like rather than as material. In the words of Sir James Jeans, "...the cumulative evidence of various pieces of probable reasoning makes it seem more and more likely that reality is better described as mental than as

1 Limitations of Science, pp. 193—94.

2 SBG. XVIII. 13—14.

3 Limitations of Science, p. 139.

4 Physics and Philosophy p. 199.

material."¹ The progress that science has made from particle-pictures to wave-pictures of radiation and matter is, really speaking, a progress from what was once thought of as material to what may be called mental. "And now that we find that we can best understand the course of events in terms of knowledge, there is a certain presumption—although certainly no proof—that reality and knowledge are similar in their nature, or, in other words, that reality is wholly mental"² "The universe cannot admit of material representation, and the reason, I think, is that it has become a mere mental concept."³ As Prof. Sullivan has rightly stated "the universe is" in the opinion of Sir James Jeans "a thought in the mind of a Supreme Mathematician."⁴ That the universe is more like thought than anything else is the conclusion which Eddington also has arrived at, though in a slightly different way. His belief in such a view is grounded in his reflection "that the only direct knowledge we possess is knowledge of mental states."⁵

According to Prof. Sullivan, "...the chief point in favour of the view we have just sketched is that it preserves the principle of continuity",⁶ which sees no real gaps in nature. No doubt, there may be dissenters to this principle, but the consensus of opinion is certainly on its side, and it has certainly "led to so much fanciful work in science that it will probably long remain as a working hypothesis."⁷ It is an application of this principle of continuity which makes it seem "at least conceivable that what is true of perceived objects may also be true of perceiving minds."⁸ In continuation with his account of particle-pictures and wave—pictures of photons and electrons Sir James Jeans has, it seems, rightly observed that "when we view ourselves in space and time, our consciousnesses are obviously the separate individuals of a particle-picture, but when we pass beyond space and time, they may perhaps form ingredients of a single continuous stream of life. As it is with light and electricity, so it may be with life; the phenomena may be individuals carrying on separate existences in space and time, while in deeper reality beyond space and time, we may all be members of one body."⁹

1 *Physics And Philosophy*, p. 203.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *The Mysterious Universe*, p. 169.

4 *Limitations of Science*, p. 187. 5 *Ibid.*, p. 190. 6 *Ibid.*, p. 139. 7 *Ibid.*

8 *Physics and Philosophy*, p. 204. 9 *Ibid.*

The above-given summary and sketchy account of a few observations of modern scientists serves to bring out their tendency towards an idealistic explanation of the universe, and, besides indicating their general belief in the principle of continuity, hints at their inclination to recognize an ultimate organization of consciousnesses, that is, a consciousness in which our individual consciousnesses are merged, not as, to borrow Sir James Jeans illustration, an individual in a crowd, but as rain-drops in the water of an ocean¹. And in all this Shankara's Brahma-vada, we may say, finds a good deal of support. Shankara, as we have seen, not only believes in an ultimate universal consciousness, viz., Brahma, as the ground and support of all that appears to be there, and in the ultimate unity of all individual consciousnesses or selves in it but also in the gradually increasing manifestation of life and consciousness in diverse beings, extending from grass upto Hiranyagarbha.²

Apart from all this, Shankara like modern scientists is a staunch believer in what is now called the Law of Parsimony or Principle of Simplicity. Stated briefly this law or principle requires us not to multiply our concepts or categories unnecessarily. It is believed that "the best description of the world is the simplest"³. Newton, we find, disfavoured the unnecessary multiplication of causes. According to his first rule of philosophical reasoning "..... we are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances"⁴. So also the principle associated with the name of William of Occam, and sometimes called after his name "William of Occam's Razor", requires us not to assume anything unless we feel we cannot do without it ('Entia non sunt multiplicanda preter necessitatem'⁵). Nature, it is believed, is ultimately simple, and, accordingly, favours simpler explanations of itself. These are, in brief, some of the enunciations of the Principle of Parsimony⁶. And Shankara, we find, has fully abided by it, so much so that he has ultimately reduced all entities to only one all-embracing entity called Brahma. As a matter of fact we

1 Physics and Philosophy, p. 204.

2 SBS. I. 3. 30 (प्राणित्वाविशेषेज्ञानैश्वर्याद्यभिन्वयक्तिरपि परेण परेण भूयसी भवति)

3 Henry Margenau : 'Einstein's Conception of Reality', p. 255 of 'Albert Einstein'.

4 The Mysterious Universe, p. 116.

5 Quoted and explained in 'The Mysterious Universe', p. 116.

6 See Stebbing's 'A Modern Intro. to Logic' (1930), pp. 293, 298—99, 413.

come across explicit application of this principle in his works. For example, in his commentary on Brahma-sutra, I. 3. 28, he has clearly told us that we should always prefer a simpler hypothesis (laghiyasi kalpana) to one which is comparatively complex (gariyasi). He has rejected there the 'sphota'-hypothesis and accepted the letter-hypothesis in preference to it simply because the latter is simpler than the former. According to him, "The hypothesis of him who maintains that the letters are the word may.....finally be formulated as follows. The letters of which a word consists—assisted by a certain order and number—have, through traditional use, entered into a connexion with a definite sense. At the time when they are employed they present themselves as such (i. e. in their definite order and number) to the buddhi, which, after having apprehended the several letters in succession, finally comprehends the entire aggregate, and they thus unerringly intimate to the buddhi their definite sense. This hypothesis is certainly simpler than the complicated hypothesis of the grammarians who teach that the 'sphota' is the word. For they have to disregard what is given by perception and to assume something which is never perceived; the letters apprehended in a definite order are said to manifest the sphota, and the sphota in its turn is said to manifest the sense"¹. Here is thus a clear-cut recognition and application of the law of Simplicity.

The other things in respect of which Shankara's views may rightly be said to have been corroborated by the modern scientists are their common recognition of the vastness, antiquity and changeful and destructible nature of the world. The scientists are now not only amazed at the idea of the vastness and antiquity of the universe², but have also fully realized the changeful and destructible nature of the world. While writing about the inglorious end of the world Sir James Jeans says that such an end "is not peculiar to our earth; other suns must die like our own, and any life there may be on other planets must meet the same inglorious end.....the second law of thermo-dynamics predicts that there can be but one end to the universe—a 'heat-death' in which the total energy of the universe is uniformly distributed, and all the substance of the universe is at the same temperature. This temperature will be so low as to make life

1 SBS. I. 3. 28 (Thibaut's Trans.).

2 Vide The Mysterious Universe, pp. 11—25.

(The age of the earth, which was in the West formerly believed to be only a few thousand years old, is now by the scientists estimated to be "two thousand million years"—Limitations of Science, p. 100).

impossible.”¹ As a matter of fact the scientists now believe that death, in a sense, is taking place every day, nay every moment. The physicist’s constituents of the world—call them molecules, atoms, or their constituents, viz., electrons and protons—are believed to be in a state of constant flux. So it is maintained, taking for example the substance of higher organisms, that “.....there is, in a sense, a constant death going on throughout life, and that in two ways. First, there is the throwing off of whole units—cells or organ.—to be replaced later by new ones of the same kind; and secondly, the continual breaking down of the living molecules into simple waste products which are rejected from the body..... The living protoplasm is continuously building itself up out of simple compounds, and the energy for this it can only procure by as continuously breaking itself down.”²

An attempt is sometimes made, as we have already seen, to pull down Shankara’s Brahmapada on the ground that it has given an important place to faith which is said to be something unscientific and unphilosophical. But in this respect also we find his attitude towards knowledge being actually supported by eminent scientists themselves. For example, when it is maintained that “The physicist who is looking for new discoveries must not be too critical; in the initial stages he is dependent on guessing, and he will find his way only if he is carried along by a certain faith which serves as a directive for his guesses”³, there is a clear recognition of the scientific value of initial faith. When Prof. Einstein was once asked as to “how he found his theory of relativity, he answered that he found it because he was so strongly convinced of the harmony of the universe.”⁴ A consistent sceptical attitude, apart from being self-contradictory, is neither in keeping with the demands of our practical life nor in the interest of knowledge itself. Faith in itself is really not a bad thing. What is really bad is blind faith and a faith which does not seek its fulfilment in final verification. The need and desirability of the verification of what is taken on faith to begin with can probably never be over-emphasized. Shankara duly emphasized it, and the scientists ever insist on it.

That Shankara’s belief in the Doctrine of Deeds (karmavada) is in conformity with the theory of Conservation of Energy, and an exten-

1 The Mysterious Universe, p. 24.

2 Julian Huxley : Essays in Popular Science, p. 95.

3 ‘Albert Einstein : Philosopher Scientist’, p. 292.

4 Ibid.

sion of the law of causation to the field of morality, has already been maintained in chapter VII, and hence need not be reiterated.

Having acquainted ourselves with some of the scientific truths which corroborate some of the truths propounded in Shankara's Brahmvada, let us now turn to two eminent Western philosophers in whose systems of philosophy also we find some such tenets as are analogous to some of the views of Shankara himself. To some of such philosophers, indeed, casual reference has already been made, and three of them, viz., Hegel, Green and Bradley have separately been taken up. All the same it seems to be worth-while to look into the views of two more of them, viz., Immanuel Kant and Henry Bergson, who also seem to bear clear witness to the rationality of some of the vital features of Shankara's Brahmvada.

Let us begin with Kant, the central figure in the philosophy of the west, and see what affinity he has with Shankara.

IV Shankara and Immanuel Kant

Shankara, as we have seen, has made a distinction between Paramarthika satta and Vyavaharika satta, the ultimate reality and the empirical reality; so also we find Kant distinguishing between the noumena and phenomena, the things-in-themselves and the things as they are known by us. We are told by Kant that ".....the things we perceive are not things-in-themselves as which we regard them, nor are the relations we perceive the relations of things-in-themselves."¹ None of the categories of understanding or forms of sensibility, such as causality, space, time, etc., which are so essential for our knowing the phenomenal world can be availed of in grasping the transcendental reality. "Space and time are not" for Kant "realities of things existing for themselves"², but only necessary conditions of our knowledge of the phenomenal world. Kant calls them 'a priori forms of the mind' and holds that they are absolutely necessary for any knowledge of the phenomenal world. So, according to Kant, the phenomenal world which is apprehended through the forms of sensibility and the categories of understanding is not the same as the world of reality to which they do not apply. For him ".....the being of reality is not apprehended by us, what we grasp is an appearance thereof."³ "What things-in-themselves are apart from sensibility, what it is that causes sensations in us, what it is independently

1 Frank Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 363.

2 Ibid., p. 362.

3 Radhakrishnan IP., Vol. II, p, 521.

of its effects on our sense-organs, we do not know."¹ Kant firmly believes that our senses are incapable of serving us as means of the knowledge of the noumena as such. "We cannot transcend experience or have conceptual knowledge of the super-sensuous, of things-in-themselves."² Neither the senses nor the intellect can grasp them.

Thus, Kant, like Shankara, not only distinguishes between the phenomenal world and the world of reality behind it, but is also at one with him in recognizing the limits of perceptual and conceptual knowledge and in proclaiming the unknowability of the reality as such directly through the instrumentality of mental categories. The incompetence of human mind to grasp the true nature of the ultimate reality seems to have been as well realized by this great German philosopher as by Shankara, and his belief in the existence of a reality different from the world of phenomena seems to be as firm as that of the latter: Kant, like Shankara, has openly declared that "our thought deals with the relative, and has nothing to do with the Absolute".³

Even Kant's forms of sensibility and the categories of understanding "are not known in the same way as that in which a particular thing is known."⁴ But it does not mean that Kant denies their knowledge altogether. What he has really denied is their knowledge through sense-perception and not their knowledge through transcendental reflection. And this recalls to our mind Shankara's view of the knowledge of our Self which also cannot be known in the same way in which we know a post or a pillar, yet the knowledge of which can never be denied for it is a necessary implication of our knowledge of any sort whatsoever. So, according to both Kant and Shankara it is a mistake to identify or confuse the knowing self or subject with anything that it knows. The former calls this confusion a 'transcendental illusion', and the latter, 'adhyasa'. But this mistake or confusion is a most common thing with all of us. And hence both Kant and Shankara rightly view it as natural.⁵ "Kant's relentless criticism of rational psychology for its erroneous application of the categories to the transcendental ego.....is", as Prof. Mukerji has rightly observed, "strongly reminiscent of the thoughts of Yajnavalkya and Shankara."⁶

Then, Kant is as much against the idea of the mere subjectivity of the phenomenal world as Shankara is. According to him "we cannot

1 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 363.

3 IP. Vol. I, p. 34.

5 Vide The Nature of Self, p. 24.

2 Ibid., p. 367.

4 The Nature of Self, pp. 14-15.

6 Ibid., p. 22.

know a priori the matter and contents of experience.”¹ “Real knowledge, as we human beings have it, would be impossible if it were not for several things. The mind must have something presented to it, it must be capable of being affected, or of receiving impressions.”² “Corresponding to phenomena there must be something that appears, something extra-mentem, something that affects our senses and supplies the matter of our knowledge.”³ While distinguishing what he calls his ‘transcendental idealism’ from the idealism as it was generally understood in his days, Kant has observed that “Idealism consists in the assertion, that there are none but thinking beings, all other things, which we think are perceived in intuition, being nothing but representations in the thinking beings, to which no object external to them corresponds in fact. Whereas I say, that things as objects of our senses existing outside us are given..... consequently I grant by all means that there are bodies without us, that is, things which, though quite unknown to us as to what they are in themselves, we yet know by the representations which their influence on our sensibility procures us, and which we call bodies..... Can this be termed idealism ? It is the very contrary.”⁴ These words of Kant do not fail to recall to our mind Shankara’s polemic against the subjective idealism of the Vijñanavadin Buddhists. To both Shankara and Kant, it is quite clear from this, the world of common experience is not merely a fanciful creation of this or that individual’s mind, but something objectively determined. As according to Kant so also according to Shankara the function of knowledge is to manifest or reveal reality to us. It is dependent on objects (vastutantra), and not something wholly subjective.

Another feature of Shankara’s Brahmapada which finds its corroboration by Kant consists in his recognition of the immortality and freedom of the soul, and of the moral law as determining its future happiness and unhappiness alike. Kant’s conviction that good deeds must ultimately have their reward in the form of happiness and bad deeds their retribution in the form of unhappiness speaks at once of the reign of a moral law in the world, like that of Shankara’s law of Karma, and of the freedom and responsibility of individual souls for their good and bad actions. As Shankara could not reconcile himself to the idea of

1 Thilly : A History of Phil., p 367.

2 Ibid., p. 364.

3 Ibid., pp. 269—70.

4 Mahaffy And Bernard : Kant’s Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysic, pp. 42—43.

krita-vipranasha or destruction of one's deeds, so also Kant's practical reason revolted against this idea, and led him to believe in the immortality of the soul. He opined that "The moral law commands holiness or an absolutely good will. Since the moral law is a deliverance of reason, what it enjoins must be realizable. But we cannot reach holiness at any moment of existence; hence an endless time, an eternal progress towards this perfection is necessary. In other words the soul must be immortal."¹

There is, however, a point bearing on the concept of the freedom of the soul or self which, we feel, we should not pass by. Freedom or "creative freedom", in the words of Prof. M. N. Sircar, "is the great ideal in Kant and Fichte. They suppose it to be the true nature of spirit. Self-expression was the watch-word of the German transcendentalists. The will, therefore, occupies a prominent place in both Kant's and Fichte's philosophy. And it was not difficult for Schopenhauer after them to instal it as the transcendental reality."² With Shankara also the Self is, no doubt, in its pure form perfectly free and is also granted freedom of action in some measure even in its empirical state; but the freedom of 'creative spontaneity' is not the last word with him as it seems to be with Kant. Shankara has realized the limitation of such a freedom and so has subordinated it to the notion of 'transcendent being'. As Prof. Sircar has rightly put it, "creativity imposes a limitation—it implies a division, a projection. But the Absolute must be above this. Creative spontaneity can exhibit the pure ego as free act; it cannot exhibit the pure ego as free being. Free act is not entirely free. It requires a field in which to exhibit and display itself. It has a space-time reference. Free being is independent of such reference. Free act is not quite independent of relativity. Free being is."³ Shankara, therefore, regards pure being as constituting the ultimate or true nature (svarupa) of his true Self or Brahma and considers 'creatorship' or freedom of creating the universe only as an indicatory mark (tatastha lakshana) of it. Kant however, stopped short of it and contented himself with the notion of creative freedom, and so could not get a glimpse of the freedom of being which alone, as Prof. Sircar has maintained, can be said to be true freedom for it alone is free from all reference and relativity. Nevertheless the recognition of the freedom of spirit or self remains a fact that is common to Shankara and Kant.

1 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 386,

2 Hindu Mysticism, p. 2.

3 Ibid.

According to Shankara the knower or Self can never be segregated from whatever form one's experience may take; for it is an essential condition of all experience or cognition. Its existence can never be disproved, for even in disproving it gets proved. Now, according to Kant also the concept of Self (unity of apperception) is an essential factor involved in all experience. Kant, however, does not seem to have whole-heartedly devoted himself to the realization of the ultimately true nature of this self. His primary concern, indeed, was to analyze knowledge and thereby to free philosophy from the negativistic attitude which it had assumed at the hands of Hume, who could not avoid giving this attitude to it, for he proceeded on the narrow path of empiricism chalked out for him by his predecessors, viz., Barkeley and Locke. Shankara, on the other hand, had ontological and axiological rather than epistemological interests with him. He could, therefore, naturally dig deeper into the nature of the Self. Kant, like Hume, failed to catch his true self, because he also, like his predecessor, tried to search and catch it in the midst of ordinary things of definable nature. However, his recognition of the existence of Self as a necessary accompaniment of all experience will ever remain as a standing fact to support Shankara's similar view of it.

That Kant's doctrine of 'duty for duty's sake' was also anticipated by Shrimadbhagavadgita and Shankara alike we have already seen in Chapter VII. We may, therefore, leave it with this remark that it is not only in respect of some questions of ontological or metaphysical significance but also in matters ethical that we find some of Shankara's views amply supported by Kant, a great German philosopher.

V Shankara and Henry Bergson

Another philosopher whose affinity with Shankara we have proposed to consider here is Henry Bergson, the modern Heraclitus. Reality, according to Bergson, as according to Heraclitus, is nothing but change, a perpetual change or continuous flow, and, as such, it cannot be truly grasped by means of intellect or discursive thinking¹ which by its very nature "makes cuts across the living flow of reality, and carves out of it solid objects, which we call material objects, and separate states of consciousness"², and which in point of fact do not exist in the constant flux of reality itself. If we want to know reality as it is we would have

1 Vide Creative Evolution, p. 186.

2 C. E. M. Joad : Intro. Modern Phil., p. 97.

to enter into and participate in its very inner nature. And this, according to Bergson, is possible only through intuition. Intuition with Bergson is 'something like instinct—a conscious, refined, spiritualized instinct', 'a kind of divining sympathy, a feeling which approaches nearer to the essence of things than reason'¹, or 'life, real and immediate life envisaging itself'². In Bergson's own words intuition means "instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely."³ "Instinct is sympathy."⁴ Although "Bergson is not willing to identify it with mystical experience"⁵, for he has himself said that "If by mysticism is meant (as it almost always is now-a-days) reaction against positive science, the doctrine I defend is in the end only a protest against mysticism", yet it is not very intelligible what this instinct, intuition or sympathy of Bergson really is, if not something very much akin to a direct experience of reality of which the mystics also speak. Any way, what is to our present purpose is Bergson's denial of the capacity of intellect or discursive thinking to cope with the task of knowing reality as it is, and his recognition of the fact that this reality can only be realized through our own actual 'participation in the vital surge'⁶ which it is.

No doubt, Bergson's view of reality as 'a vital surge' is diametrically opposed to Shankara's view of it as being 'devoid of all changes', nevertheless, in respect of his assertions with regard to the limitations of intellect and to the realization of the reality through an actual participation in its nature Bergson undoubtedly seems to have come very close to Shankara. Not only this, Bergson, like Shankara, has also duly recognized the practical or empirical serviceableness of intellect or logical thinking. It is only when Logic and intellect "extend their operations to the world in which everything is moving, growing, becoming, living" that they are said to "mutilate and falsify the real."⁷ But "when there is no individuality, no inwardness nothing but dead surface science and logic", it is admitted by Bergson, "have both practical and theoretical worth."⁸ Thus he seems to be supporting Shankara's distinction between vyavaharika jnana and paramarthika jnana, or para vidya and apara vidya, i. e., the knowledge of the ultimate Reality as such and the know-

1 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 524.

2 Ibid., p. 523.

3 Creative Evolution, p. 186.

4 Ibid.

5 The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Phil., p. 205.

6 Joad : Intro. Modern Phil., p. 94.

7 Thilly : A History of Phil., p. 523.

8 Ibid.

ledge of this reality as qualified. The former, we may say, is Bergson's knowledge of reality from within it, i. e., through intuition, and the latter, its knowledge from outside or through intellect, which, according to Bergson, by introducing 'stops or articulations into the ceaseless flow of reality'¹, takes only snap-shot views of things and thus 'presents us with a false view of reality'.² The view of the world that people commonly have by employing their senses has equally been regarded as being unfaithful to the true nature of reality as such by Shankara and Bergson both. It may, however, be pointed out that Shankara is not so much against reason and intellect as Bergson seems to be. No doubt, so far as the direct knowledge or vision of the ultimate reality is concerned Shankara would fully agree with Bergson that intellect and reason cannot give it to us, but he would gladly acknowledge their indirect aid even in this respect. But Bergson, it seems, is not prepared to accept even this indirect aid. This difference between them, however, cannot counter-balance the resemblance that we have just seen.

Bergson, it may be added, seems to view the universe, on the one hand, as a dead and static matter 'where mechanism reigns', and, on the other hand, as 'free' 'becoming' or 'living' which is not subject to the rule of mechanism. Shankara too, it will be recalled, is, on the one hand, a believer in the law of causation, while on the other he definitely visualizes a realm where this law, rightly speaking, does not operate. Not only is his Brahma, which is untouched by the non-free world, perfectly free³, but his jivas also have the prerogative or freedom of determining their own fate.

According to Darwin ".....chance variations in species fortuitously occur; and of these variations those which are most suited to their environment tend to survive and to reproduce themselves"⁴, while in the opinion of Lamarck "adaptation to environment is the determining factor in evolution". "As environment changes", Lamarck believes, "species put forth new developments to adapt themselves to it : those which are the most successful in compassing the necessary adaptations tend to survive; the others tend to die out"⁵. Both these evolutionists "conceive the whole process of evolution on mechanical lines", 'regard the universe like the works of a gigantic clock', and 'find it unnecessary to postulate

1 Joad : Intro. Modern Phil., p. 90.

2 Ibid.

3 SB. Shveta. Up. I. 7 (ब्रह्म प्रपञ्चासंस्पृष्टं स्वतंत्रं च तथापि प्रपञ्चो नस्वतंत्रः)

4 Joad : Intro. Modern Phil., p. 87. 5 Ibid.,

the existence of mind or purpose to explain how and why the process takes place".¹ But Bergson has levelled a very trenchant criticism against such explanations of the evolution of the world. He has pertinently asked "why, if the determining factor in evolution is adaptation to environment, evolution did not cease thousands of years ago ?"² "A very inferior organism", as he says, "is as well adapted as ours to the conditions of existence, judged by its success in maintaining life : why, then, does life, which has succeeded in adapting itself, go on complicating itself and complicating itself more and more dangerously ?.....why did not life stop wherever it was possible ? Why has it gone on ? Why indeed, unless it be that there is an impulse driving it to take ever greater and greater risks towards its goal of an ever higher and higher efficiency ?"³

Bergson has, therefore, posited an eternal driving force to explain the general direction of the evolutionary process, which, according to him, is hopelessly inexplicable on purely mechanistic lines. This driving or vital force he has called 'elan vital' which, as we gather from his anti-parallelism psychology, and as it is indicated by his drive against the doctrine of chance evolution, is a conscious principle. As Mr. Joad has rightly said, "consciousness" for Bergson "is the elan vital itself."⁴ It is not conditioned by cerebral activities, but, on the other hand, conditions them. "The brain", he would say, "is not consciousness, nor does it contain the cause of conscious processes; it is simply the organ of consciousness, the point at which consciousness enters into matter; andit has been evolved by consciousness for certain specific purposes which are bound up with the necessity for action."⁵ Thus, in respect of his disparagement of chance-evolution and by positing an 'elan vital' of the nature of consciousness, Bergson, it seems, again lends material support, partial though it may be, to the view of Shankara that it is Brahma, the pure consciousness itself, which manifests and sustains The entire paraphernalia of the universe. Can we not say that Shankara's drive against the materialists and the samkhya view of the evolution of the world from inert Prakriti anticipated in some measure Bergson's disapproval of the evolutionary doctrines of Darwin and Lamarck ?

In Bergson's account of evolution both matter and life, and so all things that are there, have for their ultimate origin the one spiritual stream or continuity of consciousness, or conscious current, which itself takes various forms as it goes on advancing towards an

1 Joad : Intro. Modern Phil., p. 88.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., pp. 88-89.

4 Ibid., p. 90.

5 Ibid.

unknown and unpredictable destiny, ever creating newer and newer facts and forms. The matter, the so-called dead and inert matter, strictly speaking, does not seem to be, with Bergson, an absolutely 'other' of the mind. It seems, on the other hand, to have got a close kinship and community of nature with the conscious life. Their duality, as much as the problem of bringing them together, is said to be of intellectual origin which, along with the problem pertaining to their reconciliation, disappears if we have recourse to intuition. In the words of Prof. Radhakrishnan, ".....inert matter on further analysis has become practically identical with conscious life. The real world, subjective as well as objective, is dynamic and can be grasped only by intuition."¹ In the words of Bergson himself "Neither is space so foreign to our nature as we imagine, nor is matter so completely extended in space as our senses and intellect represent it."² According to him "it is consciousness or rather supra-consciousness that is at the origin of life. Consciousness, or supra-consciousness, is the name for the rocket whose extinguished fragments fall back as matter; consciousness, again, is the name for that which subsists of the rocket itself, passing through the fragments and lighting them up into organisms."³ "This consciousness," according to Bergson, "is a need of creation"⁴..... Can we, then, not say that Bergson, who holds 'a single principle of creation' to be 'at the base of things'⁵, and to be of the nature of consciousness, is a spiritualistic monist, and has thus cast the weight of his opinion on the side of Shankara's Brahmvada as against the views of those who advocate dualism, pluralism, or materialistic monism as the ultimate truth ?

On making the assumption that the ultimate reality is one and of the nature of consciousness alone, one, undoubtedly, finds it difficult to account for the evolution or appearance of the world of obvious distinctions of diverse sorts. And this difficulty, we may say, is equally experienced by Bergson and Shankara both, in so far as the former, though inconsistently with his fundamental position, posits matter itself, which is held to be an evolute or product of the ultimate stream of consciousness, to make the activity of his stream of consciousness or *elan vital* itself possible,⁶ and the latter, 'maya' to account for the appearance of the world. Matter in the case of Bergson is as indispensable for the origin and continuance

1 The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Phil., p. 154.

2 Creative Evolution, p. 214.

3 Ibid., p. 275.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 291.

6 Vide Creative Evolution, p. 103 ("When a shell bursts...itself")

of evolution as with Shankara maya is for the creation, etc., of the world. No matter whether the ultimate consciousness is viewed as a perpetual becoming or as a perfect 'being' the difficulty is there. If we cannot visualize how one Brahma of the nature of pure consciousness and being becomes the many that are apparently not of the same nature, it is also equally unintelligible how life and matter as we have them can originate from that ultimate consciousness or *elan vital* of Bergson which, as the fundamental principle of his philosophy, originally knows nothing of its bifurcation into them. As Prof. Radhakrishnan has rightly pointed out 'why should the supra-consciousness fractionate itself? Why should it break in twain?'¹, are questions which have not been satisfactorily answered by Bergson. So, in respect of this difficulty or problem pertaining to the explanation of the origin or evolution of the universe, Bergson may, again, be said to be lending some support to Shankara's view that this world can neither be said to be absolutely unreal because its appearance can by no means be denied, nor to be absolutely real because it is different in nature from what Reality in itself must logically be, and so it should be regarded as something inexplicable, something that can at best be attributed to something of inexplicable nature somehow associated with the Absolute Reality itself, though not entering into its essential nature. This, as we have seen, is Shankara's Maya which, though said to be unreal from the ultimate point of view, has got to be posited if an explanation of the world, as we understand it, is sought to be given. Bergson, however, has not posited anything like it. And so there seems to be an unbridged gulf between his ultimate reality, viz., change or becoming, on the one hand, and the static world of intellect on the other.

Thus, we find that in many respects Bergson's views seem to be resembling those of Shankara. But the difference between them is also not negligible. While Shankara holds all change and changing things to be unreal, and believes in a changeless ultimate reality, for Bergson change alone is truly real. No doubt, Shankara has also fully realized the fact of change as characterizing all names and forms that constitute our world; but behind this change he surely sees something that never changes.² To Bergson, however, there is "nothing in the universe which changes."³ In other words he does not recognize the reality and exis-

1 The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Phil., p. 159.

2 Vide SB. Shveta. Up. (ब्रह्मणोऽन्यस्य चलनात्मकत्वात्..... ब्रह्मणोऽचलत्वात्)

3 Joad : Intro. to Modern Phil., p. 93.

tence of anything whatsoever which is free from change or is not change itself. And here Bergson seems to be over-emphasizing the fact of change. As we maintained in chapter III, change by itself is inexplicable. It not only looks to something which makes it possible but also to something in which it inheres. There seems to be better logic in the words of Prof. Joseph when he says that ".....there can be no change without something which changes, i. e., which persists through a succession of states"¹ than in the assertion of Bergson that 'nothing but ceaseless change can exist, "Take away the persistent reality", as says Mr. May Sinclair, "underlying any process of change, or any chain of changes, and both process and chain split up into an infinite series, of which you cannot say of any one moment that it constitutes a change. Everything is at the infinitely divisible instant *when* it is. You have, in fact, no change at all, but the monotony of an endless series of absolute entities. The one underlying reality, then, is the only means by which a process of change can be carried on....."² As Shankara has maintained "modifications cannot, as experience teaches, take place unless there is some substratum which is modified."³ "Whatever difficulties there may be in understanding what a substance is, or the relation of a thing to its attributes, it is a desperate remedy to offer us instead a 'stream' of events, loose and disconnected, in relations of simultaneity and succession."⁴

Evolution to Bergson, as we have seen, is unintelligible and inexplicable without admitting an urge or drive behind it. But can we not say the same thing about his change, unless there be admitted at least a changeless knower of this change? Without a witness of change it is utterly futile to talk of it. Either Bergson speaks of change without knowing it or he speaks of it after having known it. In the former case his assertion is not at all reliable, while in the latter he must admit that while knowing change he does not himself change. If the knower of change, like what is known, is also resolved into ceaseless change, the very possibility of the knowledge of change disappears. The knowledge of changes in its contents or objects needs to be referred to a subject of that knowledge, the witness of those changes, which must not himself be subject to change. The knowledge of change is never possible without a changeless knower of it. One who is actually moving on with a current of water cannot perceive the water or better waters which have already

1 Joseph : An Intro. to Logic, p. 405.

2 A Defence of Idealism, p. 344.

3 SBS. II. 2. 30 (Thibaut's Trans.).

4 Joseph : An Intro. to Logic, p. 405.

gone ahead or which are following far behind. The doctrine of constant and universal change really collapses not only when it collides against the hard facts of memory and recognition but also when it runs counter to the most indubitable feeling of persons' self-identity. The facts of one person's experience cannot be remembered or recognized by another person. Much the same, if the self or subject of experience were changing every moment, it could not remember or recognize the facts experienced in the past by a different self or subject which no longer exists to remember or recognize them.

In case self-identical or in some sense permanent nature is not conceded to the subject of knowledge or self, the so-believed identity of things can on no account be satisfactorily explained. Identity and similarity being two quite distinct things the explanation of the former through the latter is not at all acceptable. In recognizing a thing as this or that we certainly do not mean that it is similar to one we perceived in the past. The difference between the recognition of a thing as itself and the cognition of its similarity to something else is too patent to need any emphasis. Shankara, therefore, has rightly rejected the explanation of identity through similarity.¹ Moreover, the recognition of similarity itself, as much as that of identity forces upon us the admission of a (permanent) self able to grasp it. Without this admission neither the recognition of identity nor that of similarity is at all explicable.²

No doubt, Bergson would say that we know and can know change, since we are ourselves change and can, as such, participate in 'duration' or ceaseless flow of time, through intuition. And Shankara also, one might urge, speaks of the knowledge of his Brahma or ultimate Reality by means of being it. In fact, the view that the inner and true nature of the ontological reality can be directly known, if it can ever be known with certainty, only through the knowers identity with it, as Shankara would say, or through his participation in it, as Bergson would hold, seems to be more reasonable than any other view pertaining to it, including the agnostic view which denies all knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. And in this respect, Bergson, as we have already said, lends sufficient support to the stand of Shankara. But fundamentally there is a great difference between their views here, pertaining as they do to two altogether different types of reality. Knowing a perpetually changing reality by becoming it is certainly not the same as the knowledge of a changeless reality by being it. There is nothing inconsistent in the knowledge of a

1 Vide SBS. II. 2. 25.

2 Ibid.

changeless being in and through one's identity with it; but to speak of knowledge in the absence of an enduring self-identical knower involves an inner contradiction. Whether what is known is changeless or changing, the knower at least in the last resort must be something abiding or changeless, or else it would be a sheer mockery to talk of knowledge of any sort whatsoever. Even if it be admitted, for argument's sake, that the known reality is continuously changing, it is beset with insurmountable difficulty to admit that constantly changing something knows it. The knowledge of change, as much as the knowledge of something that changes, implies an unchanged knower.

Moreover, Bergson's doctrine of pure becoming or perpetual change comes into clear conflict with the Law of causation. While arguing out his case against a similar doctrine of the Buddhists (known as 'kshanika-vada' or doctrine of momentariness) Shankara has emphatically asserted that on holding the view that nothing in the world is stationary even for two moments the relation of cause and effect cannot be established between any two events of any preceding and following moments respectively.¹ And in case this relation is denied, we shall have to admit the view that things come into existence out of non-existence. But this will go against all available evidence. Moreover, on holding such a view we shall further have to concede that all things can come out of anything whatsoever, in so far as non-existence, on this view, is equally present everywhere. And this being so sprouts, etc., should originate from the horns of a hare and such other non-entities.²

The view of universal and perpetual change is, thus, not acceptable to Shankara. In fact, Bergson's bare appeal to intuition, sympathy or instinct, is not enough to guarantee the truth of whatever he says. Either Bergson's change or becoming is something altogether different from what we commonly understand by it, or he has not been able clearly to grasp the intimations of his intuition, or there is something wrong with his intuition itself. If the latter two alternatives are true, Bergson cannot claim our acquiescence at all; but in case the first alternative is true we would, of course, listen to him but with the request that he should not use familiar words in an unfamiliar sense, and if he

1 SBS. II. 2. 20 (न च एवं.....शक्यते संपादयितुं)

2 Vide SBS. II. 2. 26 (.....निर्विशेषस्य त्वभावस्य कारणत्वाभ्युपगमे
शशविषाणादिभ्योऽप्यङ्कुरादयो जायेरन्)

does he should frankly tell us what he actually means by a certain word that he uses. And in case we are allowed to have our 'say' in the matter concerned, we would humbly point out that in our opinion it is neither the first nor the second but the third alternative that is true. So far as we know there is hardly any person who has made an appeal to intuition and has held the true reality to be a constant flux. To us, all true intuitionists seem to agree on the point that Reality as such is of the nature of being, and not of the nature of becoming. Bergson's intuition appears to us nothing more than what is called in Psychology 'introspection'; and introspection as a method of delivering facts to us is not even as reliable as sense-perception.

VI The Ultimate Problem and its solution

That Reality is, ultimately, somehow one seems to be more reasonable to believe than a belief in two or more independent reals. For, had there been really many or two unconnected and discrete reals, interaction between them would have been utterly impossible. It was, in fact, the clear realization of this difficulty involved in Descarte's conception of two perfectly different and independent entities, called by him mind and matter, that Spinoza was led to posit only one ultimate reality, named Substance, and to view mind and matter as merely two attributes of the self-same single reality. No doubt, our perception gives us a multiplicity of things; but our reflection about our knowledge of them and about their own nature and relations does not also fail to force upon our mind the fact of there being unity not only among them but also between us and the objects of our experience. As Mr. M. Sinclair has observed, "The more we explore this multiplicity, the more it reveals unity. And this unity is not simply imposed on multiplicity by immediate consciousness and by the laws of thought. It is not only a question of the way we are obliged to think things, but of the way things behave. Every generalization of physical science, and every correlation of physical laws, amounts to a plain statement that within the range of the generalization the order of things is one. The law of conservation of energy is nothing if not a confession that, as far as the physical world goes, incorrigible multiplicity and difference do not obtain. It would even seem that, ultimately, the entire physical world is definable in terms of energy. And if the ultimate constitution of matter is invisible, imponderable, impalpable to any sense (its density disappeared long ago); if all the grossness, all the heaviness and hardness, all the intractable lumpiness of matter, all its so-called material qualities are not to be found in

it, but only in our consciousness of it, we need no longer juggle with terms that are so interchangeable. The realist and the idealist are both agreed that there is no physical 'It' behind those qualities. And unless we are satisfied that he is right in contending that they exist 'on their own', we may as well say straight out that these two worlds, anyhow, are one, and that the ultimate reality of 'matter' is spiritual energy."¹

As we have seen Bradley has emphatically asserted that there cannot be many reals and that the one single reality is of the nature of experience itself. And that similar is the view of Hegel, Green, and many others including Shankara, cannot be gainsaid. But, then, the question inevitably arises as to how this one Reality is related to the many of our actual experience. One may very well tell us that the ultimate Reality is one and one only and that the many of our experience are merely appearances; but unless we are told how these many appearances at all come to appear or be there, we, in our mind, cannot rest contented. Even appearances as such demand an explanation, and unless we have it to our satisfaction we cannot persuade ourselves to call a halt to our enquiry. The problem pertaining to the relation of the one and the many is, indeed, very old, and seems to be a veritable crux of all forms of really monistic philosophy.

The absolute or infinite Reality cannot be conceived to be related to the finite facts of our experience in any of the ways in which the finite facts are related among themselves; for, so to relate 'it' to them would mean to put it on the same par with them and thus to make a finite of the infinite. No doubt, nothing can be conceived to fall outside the infinite or absolute Real, nothing to be really separate from or independent of it; but at the same time nothing which is self-contradictory, and hence of a nature which is different from that of the Real, can be said to be the same as it is. Dependence on or non-difference from it cannot amount to identity with it. The appearances may not stand apart from the ultimate Reality; but they must certainly be negated by it. For, it cannot be described in terms of them, whether they be taken separately or collectively. It is neither this nor that of the appearances, nor all the appearances taken together. For, were it any or all of them, or anything akin to them, it will only be an appearance, and not reality. Once the distinction between reality and appearances, the one and the many, the perfect and the non-perfect, is made, neither of them as such can be predicated of the other.

1 A Defence of Idealism, p. 329.

All the same, the appearances, the many, the changes, have got to be accounted for. They cannot be said to be existing in their own right or on their own legs. Had they been self-existent, they would have been real themselves. Moreover, to view them as self-existent is definitely to contradict our actual experience of them and their nature. They are all effects, and as such have their causes which are necessary and sufficient to produce them. And these causes, again, must have in turn their own causes, and so on ad infinitum. But then we have not really explained the appearances as such; for we are for ever left with appearances themselves which, like the appearances with which we started, will always call for an explanation. To explain an appearance 'a' by means of another appearance 'b' is not really to explain appearance; and to enter into an infinite series of appearances in order to explain it is still worse, while to explain 'a' with the help of 'b' and 'b' with the help of 'a' is indirectly and falsely to assume that 'a' explains itself which it really does not. So, if we at all seek an ultimate explanation of an appearance or appearances, we have no other alternative but to seek it in an uncaused cause which can be nothing other than the self-existent, changeless and perfect Reality itself. But here again we are faced with an obviously insurmountable difficulty. It is really beyond our understanding to grasp how the perfect and ever-accomplished, changeless and one Reality can ever give rise to the appearance of many and imperfect facts or phenomena of our experience which are by their very nature subject to change.

Either we should frankly admit, like Bradley, that "Why there are appearances, and why appearances of such various kinds, are questions not to be answered"¹, or we should hold, like Shankara, that there is something of inexplicable nature, called by him *maya*, somehow associated with the ultimate Reality itself, which, in the last resort, is responsible for all the appearances and changes that characterize the world of our finite experience. There, indeed, seems to be no third choice between these two alternatives. Shankara's *maya* seems to be something akin to Hegel's antithesis which the ever-accomplished Absolute has been held by him to supply to confront itself in the course of accomplishing itself. Of course, to posit some such thing as inexplicable *maya* seems to be a logical necessity, if an explanation of the many appearances is at all hazarded by a believer in one ultimate Reality of the nature of pure being and pure consciousness. But does not the positing of *maya* or

1 Appearance And Reality, p. 453

antithesis mean to compromise the belief in the purity and perfection of the Absolute Reality ? Either this maya belongs to the absolute Reality or Brahma itself or it does not belong to it. But in either case we feel we are confronted with a difficulty. If maya does not belong to Brahma and exists independently of It, the oneness of Brahma Or Ultimate Reality is really gone. And so Shankara himself is not prepared to grant it an independent status. But to believe that maya somehow belongs to Brahma itself is also not free from the charge of contaminating Its own pure nature.

Are we, then, to admit that the many, the appearances, are as real as the One, the Real ? But to admit this also, as we have seen, is antithetical to the verdict of our reason, and seems to contradict all available evidence that modern science seems to have brought to bear upon the ultimate nature of the reality as such. The problem of the one and many, thus, really seems to defy all attempts at its explanation. It is, we believe, the most fundamental problem of philosophy which will ever stand to baffle all intellectual efforts to solve it. Shall we, then, give up all our efforts to know what we are and what the world around us is, and turn agnostics ? Shall we maintain that philosophy is good for nothing, and turn our backs to it ? Certainly not, Shankara would reply. And we feel that so long as man is what he is he cannot give up philosophizing, no matter whether he succeeds in getting all his problems solved, or not.

According to Shankara, we may say, one very definite and salutary result of philosophical reflections is the knowledge of one's self as being something different from all that is known and is of the nature of becoming, and hence merely an appearance and not something truly real, which must be self-existent, immutable and uncontradictable. How the known world of becoming nature is ultimately related to the self-existent ultimate 'being' we may not be able intellectually to grasp; but this difficulty cannot succeed in changing our view of our self and the objective world alike. On the other hand, one is very likely led to believe that it is probably a problem which falls beyond the sphere of intellect to tackle. And thus to see the limits of reason or intellect is also the result of rationalizing or philosophizing itself. A true philosopher, there-upon, is bound to explore other avenues and to tap at other doors, if there be any, that may lead him into a direct and certain knowledge of the inner nature of the ultimate Reality itself. And that is what Shankara seems to have actually done. Having been convinced through the application of his reason that the world as such cannot be real, and having realized through a most direct and certain experience the nature of ultimate

Reality as pure being, pure consciousness and pure bliss, indefinable and indeterminate, he had, it appears, no other choice but to say that the world is a creation of the inexplicable something, some power, of the omnipresent and omnipotent Ishvara Himself who cannot be any being other than Brahma itself when conceived as possessed of this wonderful world-projecting power, called maya. Ishvara and Maya are, thus, with Shankara logical necessities which have got to be postulated if an explanation of the phenomenal or empirical world is sought at all.

So long as the experience of this world forces upon our mind the necessity of its explanation, and so long as the most direct and indubitable knowledge of Brahma, the absolute Reality, which ultimately annuls all inquisitiveness as to its why, does not dawn upon our mind, the only thing that can reasonably be done is to attribute it to something mysterious, something inexplicable, somehow inexplicably associated with the ultimate Reality itself. Of course, as we have seen, there are theoretical difficulties in this explanation as well. But an explanation like this seems to be logically forced upon us and is also indirectly vouched for by the assertions of so many sages and mystics alike who claim to have had a most direct and certain experience or vision of the Reality as it is in itself, and whose honesty of purpose and integrity of character we have no reason to suspect. So, it may be added that either the problem of the relation between the one and the many will always stand there to baffle our attempts to hit at a satisfactory solution thereof, or, if we really mean sincerely to seek the knowledge of our true self and of the ultimate Reality lying behind but supporting all appearances, we shall have to give up the false notion that philosophy should be wedded to thought or reason alone, and shall have to try other methods as well, taking into due consideration not only the facts of our waking experience but also the so-called mystic experiences, as well as our own experiences of sound sleep and dream-state.

VII The Concluding Remarks

We have tried to understand Shankara's Brahmanavada in almost all its important aspects, as much as it has been possible for us to do within our scope. Now, to conclude it, it seems to be desirable to state in a summary form some such features of it as seem to have enabled it to attract towards itself a long and still unending chain of eminent thinkers and scholars, and to hold its own against all sorts of attacks made by its opponents from diverse directions, throughout the long centuries following Shankara's advocacy of it.

To begin with, it may be stated that the ideal of human life entertained in this system is unquestionably the highest possible ideal. The attainment of perfect bliss, being and consciousness, incorruptible and eternal, and that in this very life, is certainly a very great promise that this system has made to any deserving aspirant after it. The idea of perfect identity with Brahma, the absolute Reality, is undoubtedly much superior to one of communion with or proximity to a personal God. The exaltation of one's own finite self to the position of the universal self of all is really an extremely bright prospect, and the possibility of its actualization here and now, an unexcelled attraction. There is perhaps no system of philosophy in the world which can, in this respect, claim an equality of status with this system, nothing to say of surpassing it.

And then, in conceiving the Ultimate Reality as our very self this system has furnished the surest proof of its existence to us. While for other systems of philosophy the ultimate Reality as such is ever a matter of mental construction or conjecture, and so its existence, merely problematic, the ultimate Reality of this system, on the other hand, is an indubitable fact of one's own immediate experience. No doubt, ordinarily our awareness of it is indistinct and partial, all the same its existence is never missed by us. And in case a person makes an attempt worthy of its clear realization he has it in and through his own self itself. The great importance that this system has attached to the verification of what one learns from scriptures and by exercising one's own thought, by means of one's own direct and indubitable experience, indicates at once the earnestness of its spirit and its advocate's perfect confidence in the cogency of his judgements.

While other systems of philosophy in general, and the western systems of it in particular, seem to suffer from narrowness of vision with regard to both the facts of experience and the means of acquiring the knowledge there-of, the outlook of this system, on the other hand, is very comprehensive and catholic in character. It takes into consideration not only the experiences of waking-life but also the experiences of dream-state and sound sleep, as well as the uncommon experiences of mystics, saints and sages, and accordingly employs all the means of acquiring their knowledge. Sense-perception, thought, testimony and intuition have all been given their due in their proper spheres. And it is really something which speaks volumes in favour of this system.

A great merit of this system which makes it rank very high among philosophical endeavours and to hold its own unshaken against all

attempts to discredit it is its firm and loop-hole-less epistemological ground, which it never leaves and which consists in its fundamental belief in the foundational character of self or consciousness. One may subscribe to any sort of ontological 'ism'; but one cannot consistently deny the epistemological centrality or priority of the knowing self. Consciousness, as the true self of this system, is, undoubtedly, the most certain primordial reality. Its existence can never be doubted or disproved, although it cannot be understood in terms of any category or categories without which no knowledge of the objective or particular facts is ever possible. It is essentially immediate, unobjectifiable and non-relational. And any person who, like Hume, makes an attempt to objectify or relate it is bound to stumble against this or that something which is not his true self. The recognition of the immediacy and ultimacy of consciousness, or self as such, seems to be the greatest and the most fundamental necessity of thought, and in not missing it lies the unrivalled strength of the system we have tried to understand.

Moreover, the conception of ultimate Reality as being immutable, self-existent and self-shining which this system has placed before us is decidedly more appealing to our reason than the notion of a reality of pure becoming-nature or of one which accomodates all becoming in its nature and is yet said to be perfect and ever-accomplished. To view Reality as pure becoming or change is not only to make it depend upon something else which must accordingly be, truly speaking, more real than becoming itself, but is also to fly in the face of the fact of most commonly made distinction between the so-called illusory and real percepts, on the plain ground that the former are subject to change while the latter are believed to remain what they appear to be. And to regard Reality as both perfect and becoming is obviously self-contradictory. Reality as such must necessarily be self-existent, and hence immutable. So, in holding fast to this view of Reality Shankara's Brahmapada seems to be more faithful to its nature than any other system which views it otherwise.

But if Reality be said to be of the nature of being, consistency of thought requires that the becoming must be viewed as unreal. And we know that Shankara has been consistent and bold enough to declare it to be so. Nevertheless, the question of the appearance of becoming inevitably arises. No matter whether becoming is judged as real or unreal, it cannot be maintained to be self-existent. Whatever be said about its appearance, it cannot stand in and by itself. There must be some ground and support for it. But what else other than 'being' can

there be to provide this ground and support to it ? So, if Shankara views his Brahma, the absolute Being, to be the ultimate ground and support of the entire universe of the nature of becoming, he is again quite consistent. And it also seems to be quite reasonable to maintain that becoming does not enter into the essential nature of being, for, if it did so, being as such would cease to exist, which is impossible because self-contradictory.

Can we, then, not ask : 'how is becoming related to being ?' It is undoubtedly the ultimate problem, as we have already pointed out, which a student of Shankara's Brahmapada is, sooner or later, inevitably confronted with; and we have seen that Shankara's answer to this ultimate question does not ordinarily appear to be very satisfactory. But we have also no hesitation in admitting that if we follow Shankara's subtle logic quite faithfully, there seems to be no other alternative, if we insist on getting an answer to this question, but to conceive or posit something inexplicable somehow associated with, but not entering into and affecting the essential nature of, Brahma, the absolute Being, itself. No doubt, such a conception when taken in itself seems to be something inconsistent with the essentially true nature of Brahma; but at the same time we are driven to this apparent inconsistency in the interest, and by the force, of consistency itself. That is probably why even great logicians and scholars, like Shriharsha, Vachaspati Mishra, Sureshvaracharya and Madhavacharya, and so many others, have seen nothing illogical in this system while associating themselves with it. Rigorous logic and boldness of judgement do, in fact, constitute a vital feature of this system. And above all, its ultimate appeal to the facts of immediate and indubitable experience seems to be an infallible rebuff to whatever charge of inconsistency is made against it. For, as Mr. M. Sinclair has said, "There is no arguing against certainties....."¹

The distinction which Shankara has made between the common-sense and ultimate points of view should also not be forgotten here. For, the recognition of this distinction, which is, in fact, quite in consonance with the physicist's distinction between his own view of reality and that of others, has enabled this system of philosophy, on the one hand, to refute all charges of indifference or antipathy to moral life, and, on the other hand, to attract many such persons towards itself as have turned to philosophy with a view to escaping eternally from the entanglements of

1 A Defence of Idealism, p. 379.

all evils. If there is any system of philosophy in the world which has declared evil to be absolutely unreal, of course from the ultimate point of view, it is, if not the only system, at least one such system. The empirical reality of evil as of other things has, however, as well been recognized here as in any other system; and, accordingly, a very great importance has been attached to moral life. For, without it the vision of the ultimate Reality, which alone can annul all evils, is held to be impossible. A strict ethico-spiritual discipline of one's life is as indispensable for the dawn of true knowledge as true knowledge itself is for one's attainment of the highest truth, the greatest good and the purest bliss, all par excellence in one, called Brahma.

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